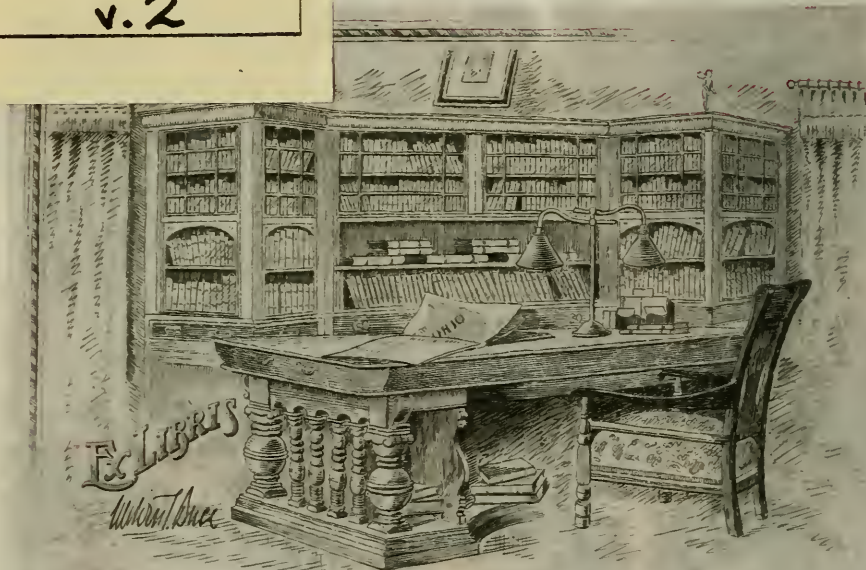


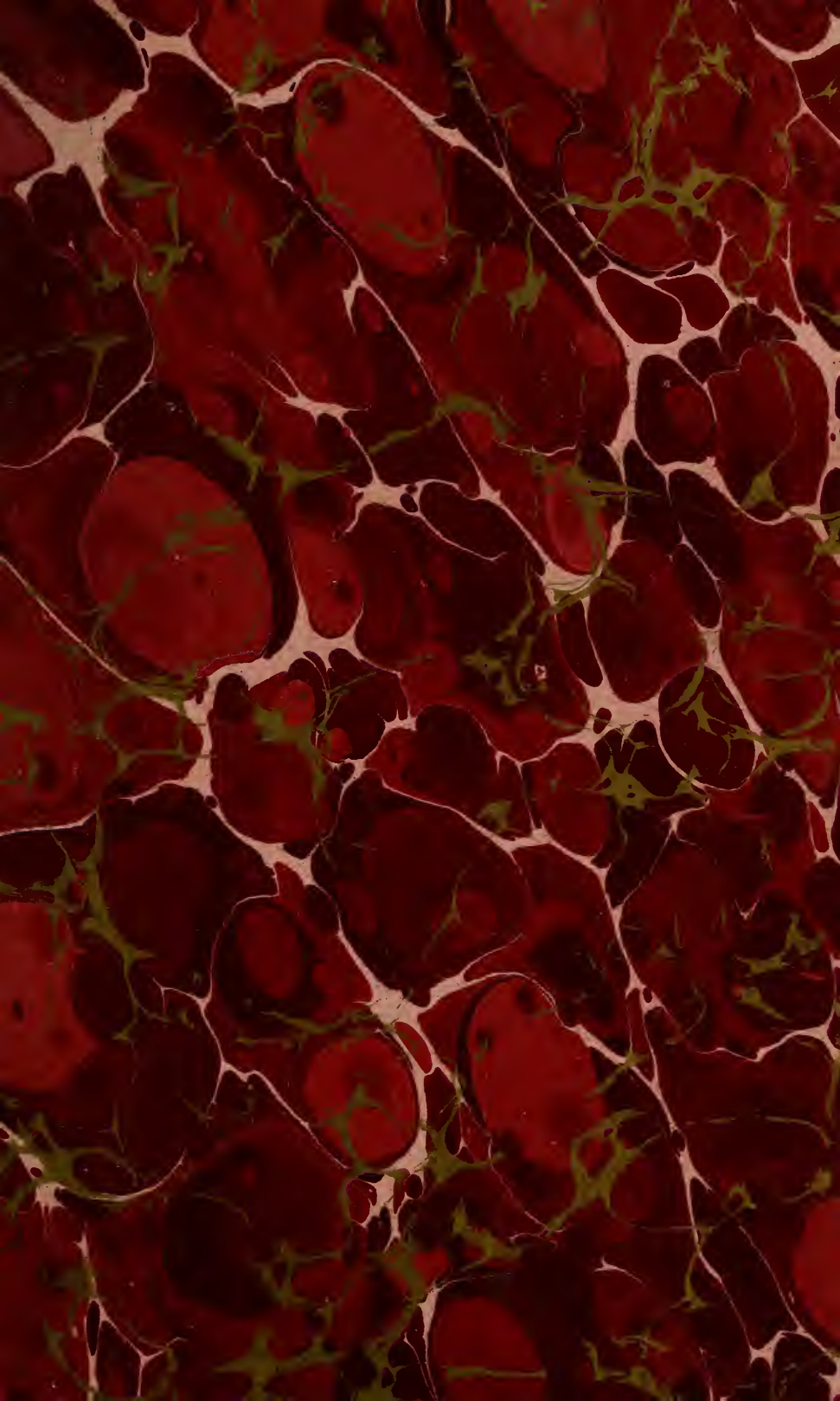


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V I T T O R I A

BY

GEORGE MEREDITH

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME II.

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V I T T O R I A.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRIMA DONNA.

“WHOEVER is in my box is my guest,” said the countess, adding a convulsive imperative pressure on Carlo’s arm, to aid the meaning of her deep underbreath. She was a woman who rarely exacted obedience, and she was spontaneously obeyed. No questions could be put, no explanations given in the crash, and they threaded on amid numerous greetings in a place where Milanese society had habitually ceased to gather, and found itself now in assembly with unconcealed sensations of strangeness. A card lay on the table of the countess’s private retiring-room: it bore the name of General Pierson. She threw off her black lace scarf. “Angelo Guidascarpi is in Milan,” she said. “He has killed one of the

Lenkensteins, sword to sword. He came to me an hour after you left; the sbirri were on his track; he passed for my son. He is now under the charge of Barto Rizzo, disguised; probably in this house. His brother is in the city. Keep the cowl on your head as long as possible; if these hounds see and identify you, there will be mischief." She said no more, satisfied that she was understood, but opening the door of the box, passed in, and returned a stately acknowledgment of the salutations of two military officers. Carlo likewise bent his head to them; it was like bending his knee, for in the younger of the two intruders he recognised Lieutenant Pierson. The countess accepted a vacated seat; the cavity of her ear accepted the general's apologies. He informed her that he deeply regretted the intrusion; he was under orders to be present at the opera, and to be as near the stage as possible, the countess's box being designated. Her face had the unalterable composure of a painted head upon an old canvas. The general persisted in tendering excuses. She replied, "It is best, when one is too weak to resist, to submit to an outrage quietly." General Pierson at once took the position assigned to him; it was not an agreeable one. Between Carlo and the lieutenant no attempt at conversation was made.

The general addressed his nephew in English. "Did you see the girl behind the scenes, Wilfrid?"

The answer was "No."

"Pericles has her fast shut up in the Tyrol: the best habitat for her if she objects to a whipping. Did you see Irma?"

"No; she has disappeared too."

"Then I suppose we must make up our minds to an opera without head or tail. As Pat said of the sack of potatoes, 'twould be a mighty fine beast if it had them.'"

The officers had taken refuge in their opera glasses, and spoke while gazing round the house.

"If neither this girl nor Irma are going to appear, there is no positive necessity for my presence here," said the general, reduced to excuse himself to himself. "I'll sit through the first scene and then beat a retreat. I might be off at once; the affair looks harmless enough: only, you know, when there's nothing to see, you must report that you have seen it, or your superiors are not satisfied."

The lieutenant was less able to cover the irksomeness of his situation with easy talk. His glance rested on Countess Lena von Lenkenstein, a quick motion of whose hand made him say that he should go over to her.

“Very well,” said the general; “be careful that you give no hint of this horrible business. They will hear of it when they get home: time enough!”

Lieutenant Pierson touched at his sister’s box on the way. She was very excited, asked innumerable things,—whether there was danger? whether he had a whole regiment at hand to protect peaceable persons? “Otherwise,” she said, “I shall not be able to keep that man” (her husband) “in Italy another week. He refused to stir out to-night, though we know that nothing can happen. Your prima donna celestissima is out of harm’s way.”

“Oh, she is safe—ze minx;” cried Antonio-Pericles, laughing and saluting the Duchess of Graätli, who presented herself at the front of her box. Major de Pymont was behind her, and it delighted the Greek to point them out to the English lady with a simple intimation of the character of their relationship, at which her curls shook sadly.

“Pardon, madame,” said Pericles. “In Italy, a husband away, ze friend takes title: it is no more.”

“It is very disgraceful,” she said.

“Ze morales, madame, suit ze sun.”

Captain Gambier left the box with Wilfrid, expressing in one sentence his desire to fling Pericles over to the pit, and in another his belief that a mutual

English friend, named Merther Powys, was in the house.

"He won't be in the city four-and-twenty hours," said Wilfrid.

"Well ; you'll keep your tongue silent."

"By heavens ! Gambier, if you knew the insults we have to submit to ! The temper of angels couldn't stand it. I'm sorry enough for these fellows, with their confounded country, but it's desperate work to be civil to them ; upon my honour, it is ! I wish they would stand up and let us have it over. We have to bear more from the women than the men."

"I leave you to cool," said Gambier.

The delayed absence of the maestro from his post at the head of the orchestra, where the musicians sat awaiting him, seemed to confirm a rumour that was now circling among the audience, warning all to prepare for a disappointment. His bâton was brought in and laid on the book of the new overture. When at last he was seen bearing onward through the music-stands, a low murmur ran round. Rocco paid no heed to it. His demeanour produced such satisfaction in the breast of Antonio-Pericles that he rose, and was guilty of the barbarism of clapping his hands. Meeting Ammiani in the lobby, he said, "Come, my good friend, you shall help me to pull Irma through to-

night. She is vinegar—we will mix her with oil. It is only for to-night, to save that poor Rocco's opera."

"Irma!" said Ammiani; "she is by this time in Tyrol. Your Irma will have some difficulty in showing herself here within sixty hours."

"How!" cried Pericles, amazed, and plucking after Carlo to stop him. "I bet you——"

"How much?"

"I bet you a thousand florins you do not see la Vittoria to-night."

"Good. I bet you a thousand florins you do not see Irma."

"No Vittoria, I say!"

"And I say, no Lazzeruola!"

Agostino, who was pacing the lobby, sent Pericles distraught with the same tale of the rape of Irma. He rushed to Signora Piaveni's box and heard it repeated. There he beheld, sitting in the background, an old English acquaintance, with whom Captain Gambier was conversing.

"My dear Powys, you have come all the way from England to see your favourite's first night. You will be shocked, sir. She has neglected her art. She is exiled, banished, sent away to study and to compose her mind."

"I think you are mistaken," said Laura. "You will see her almost immediately."

"Signora, pardon me ; do I not know best ?"

"You may have contrived badly."

Pericles blinked and gnawed his moustache as if it were food for patience.

"I would wager a milliard of francs," he muttered. With absolute pathos he related to Mr. Powys the aberrations of the divinely-gifted voice, the wreck which Vittoria strove to become, and from which he alone was striving to rescue her. He used abundant illustrations, coarse and quaint, and was half hysterical ; flashing a white fist and thumping the long projection of his knee with a wolfish aspect. His grotesque sincerity was little short of the shedding of tears.

"And your sister, my dear Powys ?" he asked, as one returning to the consideration of shadows.

"My sister accompanies me, but not to the opera."

"For another campaign—hein ?"

"To winter in Italy, at all events."

Carlo Ammiani entered and embraced Merthyr Powys warmly. The Englishman was at home among Italians : Pericles, feeling that he was not so, and regarding them all as a community of fever-

patients without a hospital, retired. To his mind it was the vilest treason, the grossest selfishness, to conspire or to wink at the sacrifice of a voice like Vittoria's to such a temporal matter as this, which they called patriotism. He looked on it as one might look on the Hindoo drama of a Suttee. He saw in it just that stupid action of a whole body of fanatics combined to precipitate the devotion of a precious thing to extinction. And worse ; for life was common, and women and Hindoo widows were common ; but a Vittorian voice was but one in a generation—in a cycle of years. The religious belief of the connoisseur extended to the devout conception that her voice was a spiritual endowment, the casting of which priceless jewel into the bloody ditch of patriots was far more tragic and lamentable than any disastrous concourse of dedicated lives. He shook the lobby with his tread, thinking of the great night this might have been but for Vittoria's madness. The overture was coming to an end. By tightening his arms across his chest he gained some outward composure, and fixed his eyes upon the stage.

While sitting with Laura Piaveni and Merthyr Powys, Ammiani saw the apparition of Captain Weisspriess in his mother's box. He forgot her

injunction, and hurried to her side, leaving the doors open. His passion of anger spurned her admonishing grasp of his arm, and with his glove he smote the Austrian officer on the face. Weisspriess plucked his sword out; the house rose; there was a moment like that of a wild beast's show of teeth. It passed: Captain Weisspriess withdrew in obedience to General Pierson's command. The latter wrote on a slip of paper that two pieces of artillery should be placed in position, and a squad of men about the doors; he handed it out to Weisspriess.

"I hope," the general said to Carlo, "we shall be able to arrange things for you without the interposition of the authorities."

Carlo rejoined, "General, he has the blood of our family on his hands. I am ready."

The general bowed. He glanced at the countess for a sign of maternal weakness, saw none, and understood that a duel was down in the morrow's bill of entertainments, as well as a riot possibly before dawn. The house had revealed its temper in that short outburst, as a quivering of quick lightning-flame betrays the forehead of the storm.

Countess Ammiani bade her son make fast the outer door. Her sedate energies could barely control her agitation. In helping Angelo Guidascapi

to evade the law, she had imperilled her son and herself. Many of the Bolognese sbirri were in pursuit of Angelo. Some knew his person; some did not; but if those two before whom she had identified Angelo as being her son Carlo chanced now to be in the house, and to have seen him, and heard his name, the risks were great and various.

“Do you know that handsome young Count Ammiani?” Countess Lena said to Wilfrid. “Perhaps you do not think him handsome? He was for a short time a playfellow of mine. He is more passionate than I am, and that does not say a little; I warn you! Look how excited he is. No wonder. He is — everybody knows it — he is la Vittoria’s lover.”

Countess Lena uttered that sentence in Italian. The soft tongue sent it like a coiling serpent through Wilfrid’s veins. In English or in German it would not have possessed the deadly meaning.

She may have done it purposely, for she and her sister, Countess Anna, studied his face. The lifting of the curtain drew all eyes to the stage.

Rocco Ricci’s bâton struck for the opening of one of his spirited choruses; a chorus of villagers, who sing to the burden that Happiness, the aim of all

humanity, has promised to visit the earth this day, that she may witness the union of the noble lovers, Camillo and Camilla. Then a shepherd sings a verse, with his hand stretched out to the impending castle. There lives Count Orso: will he permit their festivities to pass undisturbed? The puling voice is crushed by the chorus, which protests that the heavens are above Count Orso. But another villager tells of Count Orso's power, and hints at his misdeeds. The chorus rises in reply, warning all that Count Orso has ears wherever three are congregated; the villagers break apart and eye one another distrustfully, reuniting to the song of Happiness before they disperse. Camillo enters solus. Montini, as Camillo, enjoyed a warm reception; but as he advanced to deliver his romanzo, it was seen that he and Rocco interchanged glances of desperate resignation. Camillo has had love passages with Michiella, Count Orso's daughter, and does not hesitate to declare that he dreads her. The orphan Camilla, who has been reared in yonder castle with her, as her sister, is in danger during all these last minutes which still retain her from his arms.

“If I should never see her—I who, like a poor ghost upon the shores of the dead river, have been

flattered with the thought that she would fall upon my breast like a ray of the light of Elysium—if I should never see her more!” The famous tenore threw his whole force into that outcry of projected despair, and the house was moved by it: there were many in the house who shared his apprehension of a foul mischance.

Thenceforward the opera and the Italian audience were as one. All that was uttered had a meaning, and was sympathetically translated. *Camilla* they perceived to be a grave burlesque with a core to it. The quick-witted Italians caught up the interpretation in a flash. “Count Orso” Austria; “Michiella” is Austria’s spirit of intrigue; “Camillo” is indolent Italy, amorous Italy, Italy aimless; “Camilla” is YOUNG ITALY!

Their eagerness for sight of Vittoria was now red-hot, and when Camillo exclaimed “She comes!” many rose from their seats.

A scrap of paper was handed to Antonio-Pericles from Captain Weisspriess, saying briefly that he had found Irma in the carriage instead of the little “v,” thanked him for the joke, and had brought her back. Pericles was therefore not surprised when Irma, as Michiella, came on, breathless, and looking in an

excitement of anger ; he knew that he had been tricked.

Between Camillo and Michiella a scene of some vivacity ensued — reproaches, threats of calamity, offers of returning endearment upon her part ; a display of courtly scorn upon his. Irma made her voice claw at her quandum lover very finely ; it was a voice with claws, that entered the hearing sharp-edged, and left it plucking at its repose. She was applauded relishingly when, after vainly wooing him, she turned aside and said—

“What change is this in one who like a reed
Bent to my twisting hands? Does he recoil?
Is this the hound whom I have used to feed
With sops of vinegar and sops of oil?”

Michiella's further communications to the audience make it known that she has allowed the progress towards the ceremonies of espousal between Camillo and Camilla, in order, at the last moment, to show her power over the youth and to plunge the detested Camilla into shame and wretchedness.

Camillo retires : Count Orso appears. There is a duet between father and daughter : she confesses her passion for Camillo, and entreats her father to stop the ceremony ;—and here the justice of the feelings

of Italians, even in their heat of blood, was noteworthy. Count Orso says that he would willingly gratify his daughter, as it would gratify himself, but that he must respect the law. "The law is of your own making," says Michiella. "Then, the more must I respect it," Count Orso replies.

The audience gave Austria credit for that much in a short murmur.

Michiella's aside, "Till anger seizes him I wait!" created laughter; it came in contrast with an extraordinary pomposity of self-satisfaction exhibited by Count Orso—the flower-faced, tun-bellied basso, Lebruno. It was irresistible. He stood swollen out like a morning cock. To make it further telling, he took off his yellow bonnet with a black-gloved hand, and thumped the significant colours prominently on his immense chest—an idea, not of Agostino's, but Lebruno's own; and Agostino cursed with fury. Both he and Rocco knew that their joint labour would probably have only one night's display of existence in the Austrian dominions, but they grudged to Lebruno the chief merit of despatching it to the shades.

The villagers are heard approaching. "My father!" cries Michiella, distractedly; "the hour is

near : it will be death to your daughter ! Imprison Camillo : I can bring twenty witnesses to prove that he has sworn you are illegally the lord of this country. You will rue the marriage. Do as you once did. Be bold in time. The arrow-head is on the string—cut the string !”

“As I once did ?” replies Orso with frown terrific, like a black crest. He turns broadly and receives the chorus of countrymen in paternal fashion—an admirably acted bit of grave burlesque.

By this time the German portion of the audience had, by one or other of the senses, dimly divined that the opera was a shadow of something concealed—thanks to the buffo-basso, Lebruno. Doubtless they would have seen this before, but that the Austrian censorship had seemed so absolute a safeguard.

“My children ! all are my children in this my gladsome realm !” Count Orso says, and marches forth, after receiving the compliment of a choric song in honour of his paternal government. Michiella follows him.

Then came the deep suspension of breath. For, as upon the midnight you count bell-note after bell-note of the toiling hour, and know not in the darkness whether there shall be one beyond it, so that

you hang over an abysm until Twelve is sounded, audience and actors gazed with equal expectation at the path winding round from the castle, waiting for the voice of the new prima donna.

“Mia madre!” It issued tremblingly faint. None could say who was to appear.

Rocco Ricci struck twice with his bâton, flung a radiant glance across his shoulders for all friends, and there was joy in the house. Vittoria stood before them.

CHAPTER XX.

THE OPERA OF CAMILLA.

SHE was dressed like a noble damsel from the hands of Titian. An Italian audience cannot but be critical in their first glance at a prima donna, for they are asked to do homage to a queen who is to be taken on her merits: all that they have heard and have been taught to expect of her is compared swiftly with their observation of her appearance and her manner. She is crucially examined to discover defects. There is no boisterous loyalty at the outset. And as it was now evident that Vittoria had chosen to impersonate a significant character, her indications of method were jealously watched for a sign of inequality, either in her motion, or the force of her eyes. So silent a reception might have seemed cruel in any other case; though in all cases the candidate for laurels must, in common with the criminal, go through the ordeal of justification. Men do not

heartily bow their heads until they have subjected the aspirant to some personal contest, and find themselves overmatched. The senses, ready to become so slavish in adulation and delight, are at the beginning more exacting than the judgment, more imperious than the will. A figure in amber and pale blue silk was seen, such as the great Venetian might have sketched from his windows on a day when the Doge went forth to wed the Adriatic: a superb Italian head, with dark banded hair-braid, and dark strong eyes under unabashed soft eyelids. She moved as, after long gazing at a painting of a fair woman, we may have the vision of her moving from the frame. It was an animated picture of ideal Italia. The sea of heads right up to the highest walls fronted her glistening, and she was mute as moonrise. A virgin who loosens a dove from her bosom does it with no greater effort than Vittoria gave out her voice. The white bird flutters rapidly; it circles and takes its flight. The voice seemed to be as little the singer's own.

The theme was as follows:—Camilla has dreamed overnight that her lost mother came to her bedside to bless her nuptials. Her mother was folded in a black shroud, looking formless as death, like very death, save that death sheds no tears. She wept,

without change of voice, or mortal shuddering, like one whose nature weeps: "And with the forthflowing of her tears the knowledge of her features was revealed to me." Behold the Adige, the Mincio, Tiber, and the Po!—such great rivers were the tears pouring from her eyes. She threw apart the shroud: her breasts and her limbs were smooth and firm as those of an immortal goddess: but breasts and limbs showed the cruel handwriting of base men upon the body of a martyred saint. The blood from those deep gashes sprang out at intervals, mingling with her tears. She said:—

"My child! were I a goddess, my wounds would heal. Were I a saint, I should be in Paradise. I am no goddess, and no saint: yet I cannot die. My wounds flow and my tears. My tears flow because of no fleshly anguish: I pardon my enemies. My blood flows from my body, my tears from my soul. They flow to wash out my shame. I have to expiate my soul's shame by my body's shame. Oh! how shall I tell you what it is to walk among my children unknown of them, though each day I bear the sun abroad like my beating heart; each night the moon, like a heart with no blood in it. Sun and moon they see, but not me! They know not their mother. I cry to God. The answer of our God is this:—'Give

to thy children one by one to drink of thy mingled tears and blood:—then, if there is virtue in them they shall revive, thou shalt revive. If virtue is not in them, they and thou shall continue prostrate, and the ox shall walk over ye.’ From heaven’s high altar, O Camilla, my child, this silver sacramental cup was reached to me. Gather my tears in it, fill it with my blood, and drink.”

The song had been massive in monotonous, almost Gregorian in its severity up to this point.

“I took the cup. I looked my mother in the face. I filled the cup from the flowing of her tears, the flowing of her blood; and I drank!”

Vittoria sent this last phrase ringing out forcefully. From the inveterate contralto of the interview, she rose to pure soprano in describing her own action. “And I drank,” was given on a descent of the voice: the last note was in the minor key—it held the ear as if more must follow: like a wail after a triumph of resolve. It was a masterpiece of audacious dramatic musical genius addressed with sagacious cunning and courage to the sympathising audience present. The supposed incompleteness kept them listening; the intentness sent that last falling (as it were, broken) note travelling awakeningly through their minds. It is the effect of the minor key to stir

the hearts of men with this particular suggestiveness. The house rose, Italians and Germans together. Genius, music, and enthusiasm break the line of nationalities. A rain of nosegays fell about Vittoria; evvivas, bravas, shouts—all the outcries of delirious men surrounded her. Men and women, even among the hardened chorus, shook together and sobbed. “Agostino!” and “Rocco!” were called; “Vittoria!” “Vittoria!” above all, with increasing thunder, like a storm rushing down a valley, striking in broad volume from rock to rock, humming remote, and bursting up again in the face of the vale. Her name was sung over and over—“Vittoria!” “Vittoria!” as if the mouths were enamoured of it.

“*Evviva la Vittoria e l’ Italia!*” was sung out from the body of the house.

An echo replied—

“‘*Italia è il premio della VITTORIA!*’” a well-known saying gloriously adapted, gloriously rescued from disgrace.

But the object and source of the tremendous frenzy stood like one frozen by the revelation of the magic the secret of which she has studiously mastered. A nosegay, the last of the tributary shower, discharged from a distance, fell at her feet. She gave it unconsciously preference over the rest, and picked it up.

A little paper was fixed in the centre. She opened it with a mechanical hand, thinking there might be patriotic orders enclosed for her. It was a check for one thousand guineas, drawn upon an English banker by the hand of Antonio-Pericles Agiolopoulos;—freshly drawn; the ink was only half dried, showing signs of the dictates of a furious impulse. This dash of solid prose, and its convincing proof that her art had been successful, restored Vittoria's composure, though not her early statuesque simplicity. Rocco gave an inquiring look to see if she would repeat the song. She shook her head resolutely. Her opening of the paper in the bouquet had quieted the general ebullition, and the expression of her wish being seen, the chorus was permitted to usurp her place. Agostino paced up and down the lobby, fearful that he had been guilty of leading her to anti-climax. He met Antonio-Pericles, and told him so; adding (for now the mask had been seen through, and was useless any further) that he had not had the heart to put back that vision of Camilla's mother to a later scene, lest an interruption should come which would preclude its being heard altogether. Pericles affected disdain of any success which Vittoria had yet achieved. "Wait for Act the Third," he said; but his irritable anxiousness to hold intercourse with every one,

patriot or critic, German, English, or Italian, betrayed what agitation of exultation coursed in his veins. "Aha!" was his commencement of a greeting; "was Antonio-Pericles wrong when he told you that he had a prima donna for you to amaze all Christendom, and whose notes were safe and firm as the footing of the angels up and down Jacob's ladder, my friends? Aha!"

"Do you see that your uncle is signalling to you?" Countess Lena said to Wilfrid.

He answered like a man in a mist, and looked neither at her nor at the general, who, in default of his obedience to gestures, came good-humouredly to the box, bringing Captain Weisspriess with him.

"We're assisting at a pretty show," he said.

"I am in love with her voice," said Countess Anna.

"Ay; if it were only a matter of voices, countess."

"I think that these good people require a trouncing," said Captain Weisspriess.

"Lieutenant Pierson is not of your opinion," Countess Anna remarked.

Hearing his own name, Wilfrid turned to them with a weariness well acted, but insufficiently to a jealous observation, for his eyes were quick under the carelessly-dropped eyelids, and ranged keenly over

the stage while they were affecting to assist his fluent tongue.

Countess Lena levelled her opera-glass at Carlo Ammiani, and then placed the glass in her sister's hand. Wilfrid drank deep of bitterness. "That is Vittoria's lover," he thought; "the lover of the Emilia who once loved me!"

General Pierson may have noticed this by-play: he said to his nephew in the brief military tone: "Go out; see that the whole regiment is handy about the house; station a dozen men, with a serjeant, at each of the back-doors, and remain below. I very much mistake, or we shall have to make a capture of this little woman to-night."

"How on earth," he resumed, while Wilfrid rose savagely and went out with his stiffest bow, "this opera was permitted to appear, I can't guess! A child could see through it. The stupidity of our civil authorities passes my understanding—it's a miracle! We have stringent orders not to take any initiative, or I would stop the Fräulein Camilla from uttering another note."

"If you did that, I should be angry with you, general," said Countess Anna.

"And I also think the government cannot do wrong," Countess Lena joined in.

The general contented himself by saying : " Well, we shall see."

Countess Lena talked to Captain Weisspriess in an undertone, referring to what she called his dispute with Carlo Ammiani. The captain was extremely playful in rejoinders.

" You iron-man !" she exclaimed.

" Man of steel would be the better phrase," her sister whispered.

" It will be an assassination, if it happens."

" No officer can bear with an open insult, Lena."

" I shall not sit and see harm done to my old playmate, Anna."

" Beware of betraying yourself for one who detests you."

A grand duo between Montini and Vittoria silenced all converse. Camilla tells Camillo of her dream. He pledges his oath to discover her mother, if alive ; if dead, to avenge her. Camilla says she believes her mother is in the dungeons of Count Orso's castle. The duo tasked Vittoria's execution of florid passages ; it gave evidence of her sound artistic powers.

" I was a fool," thought Antonio-Pericles ; " I flung my bouquet with the herd. I was a fool ! I lost my head !"

The first act, after scenes between false Camillo

and Michiella, ends with the marriage of Camillo and Camilla ;—a quatuor composed of Montini, Vittoria, Irma, and Lebruno. Michiella is in despair ; Count Orso is profoundly sonorous with paternity and devotion to the law. He has restored to Camilla a portion of her mother's sequestered estates. A portion of the remainder will be handed over to her when he has had experience of her husband's good behaviour. The rest he considers legally his own by right of documents (Treaties), and by right of possession and his sword. Yonder castle he must keep. It is the key of all his other territories. Without it, his position will be insecure. (Allusion to the Austrian argument that the plains of Lombardy are the strategic defensive lines of the Alps.)

Agostino, pursued by his terror of anti-climax, ran from the sight of Vittoria when she was called, after the fall of the curtain. He made his way to Rocco Ricci (who had given his bow to the public from his perch), and found the maestro drinking Asti to counteract his natural excitement. Rocco told Agostino that, up to the last moment, neither he nor any soul behind the scenes knew Vittoria would be able to appear except that she had sent a note to him with a pledge to be in readiness for the call. Irma had come flying in late, enraged, and in disorder, praying

to take Camilla's part; but Montini refused to act with the *seconda donna* as *prima donna*. They had commenced the opera in uncertainty whether it could go on beyond the situation where Camilla presents herself. "I was prepared to throw up my *bâton*," said Rocco, "and publicly to charge the government with the rape of our *prima donna*. Irma I was ready to replace. I could have filled that gap." He spoke of Vittoria's triumph. Agostino's face darkened. "Ha!" said he, "provided we don't fall flat, like your Asti with the cork out. I should have preferred an enthusiasm a trifle more progressive. The notion of travelling backwards is upon me forcibly, after that tempest of acclamation."

"Or do you think that you have put your best poetry in the first act?" Rocco suggested with malice.

"Not a bit of it!" Agostino repudiated the idea very angrily, and puffed and puffed. Yet he said, "I should not be lamenting if the opera were stopped at once."

"No!" cried Rocco; "let us have our one night. I bargain for that. Medole has played us false, but we go on. We are victims already, my Agostino."

"But I do stipulate," said Agostino, "that my

jewel is not to melt herself in the cup to-night. I must see her. As it is, she is inevitably down in the list for a week's or a month's incarceration."

Antonio-Pericles had this, in his case, singular piece of delicacy, that he refrained from the attempt to see Vittoria immediately after he had flung his magnificent bouquet of treasure at her feet. In his intoxication with the success which he had foreseen and cradled to its apogee, he was now reckless of any consequences. He felt ready to take patriotic Italy in his arms, provided that it would but succeed as Vittoria had done, and on the spot. Her singing of the severe phrases of the opening chant, or hymn, had turned the man, and for a time had put a new heart in him. The consolation was his also, that he had rewarded it the most splendidly—as it were, in golden italics of praise; so that her forgiveness of his disinterested endeavour to transplant her was certain, and perhaps her future implicit obedience or allegiance bought. Meeting General Pierson, the latter rallied him.

"Why, my fine Pericles, your scheme to get this girl out of the way was capitally concerted. My only fear is that on another occasion the government will take another view of it and you."

Pericles shrugged. "The gods, my dear general,

decree. I did my best to lay a case before them; that is all."

"Ah, well! I am of opinion you will not lay many other cases before the gods who rule in Milan."

"I have helped them to a good opera."

"Are you aware that this opera consists entirely of political allusions?"

General Pierson spoke offensively, as the urbane Austrian military permitted themselves to do upon occasion when addressing the conquered or civilians.

"To me," returned Pericles, "an opera—it is music. I know no more."

"You are responsible for it," said the general, harshly. "It was taken upon trust from you."

"Brutal Austrians!" Pericles murmured. "And you do not think much of her voice, general?"

"Pretty fair, sir."

"What wonder she does not care to open her throat to these swine!" thought the changed Greek.

Vittoria's door was shut to Agostino. No voice within gave answer. He tried the lock of the door, and departed. She sat in a stupor. It was harder for her to make a second appearance than it was to make the first, when the shameful suspicion cruelly attached to her had helped to balance her steps with rebellious pride; and more, the great collected wave

of her ambitious years of girlhood had cast her forward to the spot, as in a last effort for consummation. Now that she had won the public voice (love, her heart called it) her eyes looked inward; she meditated upon what she had to do, and coughed nervously. She frightened herself with her coughing, and shivered at the prospect of again going forward in the great nakedness of stage-lights and thirsting eyes. And, moreover, she was not strengthened by the character of the music and the poetry of the second act:—a knowledge of its somewhat inferior quality may possibly have been at the root of Agostino's poetic dread of an anticlimax. The *seconda donna* had the chief part in it—notably an aria (Rocco had given it to her in compassion) that suited Irma's pure shrieks and the tragic skeleton she could be. Vittoria knew how low she was sinking when she found her soul in the shallows of a sort of jealousy of Irma. For a little space she lost all intimacy with herself; she looked at her face in the glass and swallowed water, thinking that she had strained a dream and confused her brain with it. The silence of her solitary room coming upon the blaze of light—the colour and clamour of the house, and the strange remembrance of the recent impersonation of an ideal character, smote her with the sense of her having

fallen from a mighty eminence, and that she lay in the dust. All those incense-breathing flowers heaped on her table seemed poisonous, and reproached her as a delusion. She sat crouching alone till her tire-woman called; horrible talkative things! her own familiar maid, Giacinta, being the worst to bear with.

Now, Michiella, by making love to Leonardo, Camillo's associate, discovers that Camillo is conspiring against her father. She utters to Leonardo very pleasant promises indeed, if he will betray his friend. Leonardo, a wavering baritono, complains that love should ask for any return save in the coin of the empire of love. He is seduced, and invokes a malediction upon his head should he accomplish what he has sworn to perform. Camilla reposes perfect confidence in this wretch, and brings her more doubtful husband to be of her mind.

Camillo and Camilla agree to wear the mask of a dissipated couple. They throw their mansion open; dicing, betting, intriguing, revellings, maskings, commence. Michiella is courted ardently by Camillo; Camilla trifles with Leonardo and with Count Orso alternately. Jealous again of Camilla, Michiella warns and threatens Leonardo; but she becomes Camillo's dupe, partly from returning love, partly from desire for vengeance on her rival. Camilla

persuades Orso to discard Michiella. The infatuated count waxes as the personification of portentous burlesque; he is having everything his own way. The acting throughout—owing to the real gravity of the vast basso, Lebruno's burlesque, and Vittoria's archness—was that of high comedy with a lurid background. Vittoria showed an enchanting spirit of humour. She sang one bewitching barcarolo that set the house in rocking motion. There was such melancholy in her heart that she cast herself into all the flippancy with abandonment. The act was weak in too distinctly revealing the finger of the poetic political squib at a point here and there. The temptation to do it of an Agostino, who had no other outlet, had been irresistible, and he sat moaning over his artistic depravity, now that it stared him in the face. Applause scarcely consoled him, and it was with humiliation of mind that he acknowledged his debt to the music and the singers, and how little they owed to him.

Now, Camillo is pleased to receive the ardent passion of his wife, and the masking suits his taste, but it is the vice of his character that he cannot act to any degree subordinately in concert: he insists upon his own positive headship;—(allusion to an Italian weakness for sovereignties; it passed unob-

served, and Agostino chuckled bitterly over his excess of subtlety). Camillo cannot leave the scheming to her. He pursues Michiella to subdue her with blandishments. Reproaches cease upon her part. There is a duo between them. They exchange the silver keys, which express absolute intimacy, and give mutual freedom of access. Camillo can now secrete his followers in the castle; Michiella can enter Camilla's blue-room, and ravage her caskets for treasonable correspondence. Artfully she bids him reflect on what she is forfeiting for him; and so helps him to put aside the thought of that which he also may be imperilling. Irma's shrill crescendos and octave-leaps, assisted by her peculiar attitudes of strangulation, came out well in this scene. The murmurs concerning the sour privileges to be granted by a Lazzeruola were inaudible. But there has been a witness to the stipulation. The ever-shifting baritono, from behind a pillar, has joined in with an aside phrase here and there. Leonardo discovers that his fealty to Camilla is reviving. He determines to watch over her. Camillo now tosses a perfumed handkerchief under his nose, and inhales the coxcombical incense of the idea that he will do all without Camilla's aid, to surprise her; thereby teaching her to know him to be somewhat a hero.

She has played her part so thoroughly that he can choose to fancy her a giddy person ; he remarks upon the frequent instances of girls who in their girlhood were wild dreamers becoming after marriage wild wives. His followers assemble that he may take advantage of the exchanged key of silver. He is moved to seek one embrace of Camilla before the conflict:—she is beautiful ! There was never such beauty as hers ! He goes to her in the fittest preparation for the pangs of jealousy. But he has not been foremost in practising the uses of silver keys. Michiella, having first arranged with her father to be before Camillo's doors at a certain hour with men-at-arms, is in Camilla's private chamber, with her hand upon a pregnant box of ebony wood, when she is startled by a noise, and slips into concealment. Leonardo bursts through the casement window. Camilla then appears. Leonardo stretches the tips of his fingers out to her ; on his knees confesses his guilt and warns her. Camillo comes in. Thrusting herself before him, Michiella points to the stricken couple—"See ! it is to show you this that I am here." Behold occasion for a grand quatuor !

While confessing his guilt to Camilla, Leonardo has excused it by an emphatic delineation of Michiella's magic sway over him. (Leonardo, in fact,

is your small modern Italian Machiavelli, over-matched in cunning, for the reason that he is always at a last moment the victim of his poor bit of heart or honesty: he is devoid of the inspiration of great patriotic aims.) If Michiella (Austrian intrigue) has any love, it is for such a tool. She cannot afford to lose him. She pleads for him; and, as Camilla is silent on his account, the cynical magnanimity of Camillo is predisposed to spare a fangless snake. Michiella withdraws him from the naked sword to the back of the stage. The terrible repudiation scene ensues, in which Camillo casts off his wife. If it was a puzzle to one Italian half of the audience, the other comprehended it perfectly, and with rapture. It was thus that YOUNG ITALY had too often been treated by the compromising, merely discontented, dallying aristocracy. Camilla cries to him, "Have faith in me! have faith in me! have faith in me!" That is the sole answer to his accusations, his threats of eternal loathing, and generally blustering sublimities. She cannot defend herself: she only knows her innocence. He is inexorable, being the guilty one of the two. Turning from him with crossed arms, Camilla sings:—

" Mother! it is my fate that I should know
Thy miseries, and in thy footprints go.
Grief treads the starry places of the earth:
In thy long track I feel who gave me birth.

I am alone ; a wife without a lord ;
My home is with the stranger—home abhorr'd !—
But that I trust to meet thy spirit there.
Mother of sorrows ! joy thou canst not share :
So let me wander in among the tombs,
Among the cypresses and wither'd blooms.
Thy soul is with dead suns : there let me be ;
A silent thing that shares thy veil with thee."

The wonderful viol-like trembling of the contralto tones thrilled through the house. It was the highest homage to Vittoria that no longer any shouts arose : nothing but a prolonged murmur, as when one tells another a tale of deep emotion, and all exclamations, all ulterior thoughts, all gathered tenderness of sensibility, are reserved for the close, are seen heaping for the close, like waters above a dam. The flattery of beholding a great assembly of human creatures bound glittering in wizard subservience to the voice of one soul, belongs to the artist, and is the cantatrice's glory, pre-eminent over whatever poor glory this world gives. She felt it, but she felt it as something apart. Within her was the struggle of Italy calling to Italy : Italy's shame, her sadness, her tortures, her quenchless hope, and the view of Freedom. It sent her blood about her body in rebellious volumes. Once it completely strangled her notes. She dropped the ball of her chin in her throat ; paused without ceremony, and recovered

herself. Vittoria had too severe an artistic instinct to court reality ; and as much as she could she from that moment corrected the underlinings of Agostino's libretto.

On the other hand, Irma fell into all his traps, and painted her Austrian heart with a prodigal waste of colour and frank energy :—

“ Now Leonardo is my tool :

Camillo is my slave :

And she I hate goes forth to cool

Her rage beyond the wave,

Joy ! joy !

Paid am I in full coin for my caressing ;

I take, but give nought, ere the priestly blessing.”

A subtle distinction. She insists upon her reverence for the priestly (papistical) blessing, while she confides her determination to have it dispensed with in Camilla's case. Irma's known sympathies with the Austrian uniform seasoned the ludicrousness of many of the double-edged verses which she sang or declaimed in recitative. The irony of applauding her vehemently was irresistible.

Camilla is charged with conspiracy, and proved guilty by her own admission.

The act ends with the entry of Count Orso and his force ; conspirators overawed ; Camilla repudiated ; Count Orso imperially just ; Leonardo chagrined ; Camillo pardoned ; Michiella triumphant. Camillo

sacrifices his wife for safety. He holds her estates; and therefore Count Orso, whose respect for law causes him to have a keen eye for matrimonial alliances, is now paternally willing, and even anxious to bestow Michiella upon him when the Pontifical divorce can be obtained; so that the long-coveted fruitful acres may be in the family. The chorus sings a song of praise to Hymen, the 'builder of great Houses.' Camilla goes forth to exile. The word was not spoken, but the mention of 'bread of strangers, strange faces, cold climes,' said sufficient.

"It is a question whether we ought to sit still and see a firebrand flashed in our faces," General Pierson remarked as the curtain fell. He was talking to Major de Pymont outside the Duchess of Graätli's box. Two general officers joined them, and presently Count Serabiglione, with his courtliest semi-ironical smile, on whom they straightway turned their backs. The insult was happily unseen, and the count caressed his shaven chin and smiled himself onward. The point for the officers to decide was, whether they dared offend an enthusiastic house—the fiery core of the population of Milan—by putting a stop to the opera before worse should come. Their own views were entirely military; but they were paralysed by the recent pseudo-liberalistic despatches from Vienna; and agreed, with some malice in their

shrugs, that the odium might as well be left on the shoulders of the bureau which had examined the libretto. In fact, they saw that there would be rank peril in attempting to arrest the course of things within the walls of the house.

“The temper of this people is changing oddly,” said General Pierson. Major de Pymont listened awhile to what they had to say, and returned to the duchess. Amalia wrote these lines to Laura:—

“If she sings that song she is to be seized on the wings of the stage. I order my carriage to be in readiness to take her whither she should have gone last night. Do you contrive only her escape from the house. Georges de P. will aid you. I adore the naughty rebel!”

Major de Pymont delivered the missive at Laura's box. He went down to the duchess's chasseur, and gave him certain commands and money for a journey. Looking about, he beheld Wilfrid, who implored him to take his place for two minutes. De Pymont laughed. “She is superb, my friend. Come up with me. I am going behind the scenes. The unfortunate impresario is a ruined man; let us both condole with him. It is possible that he has children, and children like bread.”

Wilfrid was linking his arm to De Pymont's,

when, with a vivid recollection of old times, he glanced at his uniform with Vittoria's eyes. "She would spit at me!" he muttered, and dropped behind.

Up in her room Vittoria held council with Rocco, Agostino, and the impresario, Salvolo, who was partly their dupe. Salvolo had laid a freshly-written injunction from General Pierson before her, bidding him to exclude the chief solo parts from the Third Act, and to bring it speedily to a termination. His case was, that he had been ready to forfeit much if a rising followed; but that simply to beard the authorities was madness. He stated his case by no means as a pleader, although the impression made on him by the prima donna's success caused his urgency to be civil.

"Strike out what you please," said Vittoria.

Agostino smote her with a forefinger. "Rogue! you deserve an imperial crown. You have been educated for monarchy. You are ready enough to dispense with what you don't care for, and what is not your own."

Much of the time was lost by Agostino's dispute with Salvolo. They haggled and wrangled laughingly over this and that printed aria, but it was a deplorable deception of the unhappy man; and with Vittoria's stronger resolve to sing the incendiary

song, the more necessary it was for her to have her soul clear of deceit. She said, "Signor Salvolo, you have been very kind to me, and I would do nothing to hurt your interests. I suppose you must suffer for being an Italian, like the rest of us. The song I mean to sing is not written or printed. What is in the book cannot harm you, for the censorship has passed it; and surely I alone am responsible for singing what is not in the book—I and the maestro. He supports me. We have both taken precautions" (she smiled) "to secure our property. If you are despoiled, we will share with you. And believe, oh! in God's name, believe that you will not suffer to no purpose!"

Salvolo started from her in a horror of amazement. He declared that he had been miserably deceived and entrapped. He threatened to send the company to their homes forthwith. "Dare to!" said Agostino; and to judge by the temper of the house, it was only too certain that, if he did so, La Scala would be a wrecked tenement in the eye of morning. But Agostino backed his entreaty to her to abjure that song; Rocco gave way, and half shyly requested her to think of prudence. She remembered Laura, and Carlo, and her poor little frightened foreign mother. Her intense ideal conception of her duty sank and

danced within her brain as the pilot-star dances on the bows of a tossing vessel. All were against her, as the tempest is against the ship. Even light above (by which I would image that which she could appeal to pleading in behalf of the wisdom of her obstinate will) was dyed black in the sweeping obscuration; she failed to recollect a sentence that was to be said to vindicate her settled course. Her sole idea was her holding her country by an unseen thread, and of the everlasting welfare of Italy being jeopardised if she relaxed her hold. Simple obstinacy of will sustained her. You mariners batten down the hatchways when the heavens are dark and seas are angry. Vittoria, with the same faith in her instinct, shut the avenues to her senses—would see nothing, hear nothing. The impresario's figure of despair touched her afterwards. Giacinta drove him forth in the act of smiting his forehead with both hands. She did the same for Agostino and Rocco, who were not demonstrative.

They knew that by this time the agents of the Government were in all probability ransacking their rooms, and confiscating their goods.

“Is your piano hired?” quoth the former.

“No,” said the latter, “are your slippers?”

They went their separate ways, laughing.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE THIRD ACT.

THE libretto of the Third Act was steeped in the sentiment of Young Italy. I wish that I could pipe to your mind's hearing any notion of the fine music of Rocco Ricci, and touch you to feel the revelations which were in this new voice. Rocco and Vittoria gave the verses a life that cannot belong to them now ; yet, as they contain much of the vital spirit of the revolt, they may assist you to some idea of the faith animating its heads, and may serve to justify this history.

Rocco's music in the opera of *Camilla* had been sprung from a fresh Italian well ; neither the elegiac-melodious, nor the sensuous-lyrical, nor the joyous buffo ; it was severe as an old masterpiece, with veins of buoyant liveliness threading it, and with sufficient distinctness of melody to enrapture those who like to suck the sugar-plums of sound. He would indeed

have favoured the public with more sweet things, but Vittoria, for whom the opera was composed, and who had been at his elbow, was young, and stern in her devotion to an ideal of classical music that should elevate and never stoop to seduce or to flatter thoughtless hearers. Her taste had directed as her voice had inspired the opera. Her voice belonged to the order of the simply great voices, and was a royal voice among them. Pure without attenuation, passionate without contortion, when once heard it exacted absolute confidence. On this night her theme and her impersonation were adventitious introductions, but there were passages when her artistic pre-eminence and the sovereign fulness and fire of her singing struck a note of grateful remembered delight. This is what the great voice does for us. It rarely astonishes our ears. It illumines our souls, as you see the lightning make the unintelligible craving darkness leap into long mountain ridges, and twisting vales, and spires of cities, and inner recesses of light within light, rose-like, towards a central core of violet heat.

At the rising of the curtain the knights of the plains, Rudolfo, Romualdo, Arnoldo, and others, who were conspiring to overthrow Count Orso at the time when Camillo's folly ruined all, assemble to deplore

Camilla's banishment, and show, bereft of her, their helplessness and indecision. They utter contempt of Camillo, who is this day to be Pontifically divorced from his wife to espouse the detested Michiella. His taste is not admired. They pass off. Camillo appears. He is, as he knows, little better than a pensioner in Count Orso's household. He holds his lands on sufferance. His faculties are paralysed. He is on the first smooth shoulder-slope of the cataract. He knows that not only was his jealousy of his wife groundless, but it was forced by a spleenful pride. What is there to do? Nothing, save resignedly to prepare for his divorce from the conspiratrix Camilla and espousals with Michiella. The cup is bitter, and his song is mournful. He does the rarest thing a man will do in such a predicament—he acknowledges that he is going to get his deserts. The faithfulness and purity of Camilla have struck his inner consciousness. He knows not where she may be. He has secretly sent messengers in all directions to seek her, and recover her, and obtain her pardon: in vain. It is as well, perhaps, that he should never see her more. Accursed, he has cast off his sweetest friend. The craven heart could never beat in unison with hers.

“She is in the darkness; I am in the light. I am

a blot upon the light; she is light in the darkness."

Montini poured this out with so fine a sentiment that the impatience of the house for sight of its heroine was quieted. But Irma and Lebruno came forward barely under tolerance.

"We might as well be thumping a tambourine," said Lebruno, during a caress. Irma bit her underlip with mortification. Their notes fell flat as bullets against a wall.

This circumstance aroused the ire of Antonio-Pericles against the libretto and revolutionists. "I perceive," he said, grinning savagely, "it has come to be a concert, not an opera; it is a musical harangue in the market-place. Illusion goes: it is politics here!"

Carlo Ammiani was sitting with his mother and Luciano breathlessly awaiting the entrance of Vittoria. The inner box-door was rudely shaken: beneath it a slip of paper had been thrust. He read a warning to him to quit the house instantly. Luciano and his mother both counselled his departure. The detestable initials "B. R.," and the one word "Sbirri," revealed who had warned, and what was the danger. His friend's advice and the commands of his mother failed to move him. "When I have seen her safe; not before," he said.

Countess Ammiani addressed Luciano: "This is a young man's love for a woman."

"The woman is worth it," Luciano replied.

"No woman is worth the sacrifice of a mother and of a relative."

"Dearest countess," said Luciano, "look at the pit; it's a cauldron. We shall get him out presently, have no fear: there will soon be hubbub enough to let Lucifer escape unseen. If nothing is done to-night, he and I will be off to the Lago di Garda to-morrow morning, and fish and shoot, and talk with Catullus."

The countess gazed on her son with sorrowful sternness. His eyes had taken that bright glazed look which is an indication of frozen brain and turbulent heart—madness that sane men enamoured can be struck by. She knew there was no appeal to it.

A very dull continuous sound, like that of an angry swarm, or more like a rapid muffled thrumming of wires, was heard. The audience had caught view of a brown-coated soldier at one of the wings. The curious Croat had merely gratified a desire to have a glance at the semicircle of crowded heads; he withdrew his own, but not before he had awakened the wild beast in the throng. Yet a little while and the roar of the beast would have burst out. It was thought

that Vittoria had been seized or interdicted from appearing. Conspirators—the knights of the plains—meet: Rudolfos, Romualdos, Arnoldos, and others,—so that you know Camilla is not idle. She comes on in the great scene which closes the opera.

It is the banqueting hall of the castle. The Pontifical divorce is spread upon the table. Courtly friends, guards, and a choric bridal company, form a circle.

“I have obtained it,” says Count Orso: “but at a cost.”

Leonardo, wavering eternally, lets us know that it is weighted with a proviso: IF Camilla shall not present herself within a certain term, this being the last day of it. Camillo comes forward. Too late, he has perceived his faults and weakness. He has cast his beloved from his arms to clasp them on despair. The choric bridal company gives intervening strophes. Cavaliers enter. “Look at them well,” says Leonardo. They are the knights of the plains. “They have come to mock me,” Camillo exclaims, and avoids them.

Leonardo, Michiella, and Camillo now sing a trio that is *tricuspidato*, or a three-pointed manner of declaring their divergent sentiments in harmony. The fast-gathering cavaliers lend masculine character to the choric refrains at every interval. Leonardo plucks Michiella entreatingly by the arm. She spurns

him. He has served her; she needs him no more; but she will recommend him in other quarters, and bids him to seek them. "I will give thee a collar for thy neck, marked 'Faithful.' It is the utmost I can do for thy species." Leonardo thinks that he is insulted, but there is a vestige of doubt in him still. "She is so fair! she dissembles so magnificently ever!" She has previously told him that she is acting a part, as Camilla did. Irma had shed all her hair from a golden circlet about her temples, barbarian-wise. Some Hunnish grandeur pertained to her appearance, and partly excused the infatuated wretch who shivered at her disdain and exulted over her beauty and artfulness.

In the midst of the chorus there is one veiled figure and one voice distinguishable. This voice outlives the rest at every strophe, and contrives to add a supplemental antiphonic phrase that recalls in turn the favourite melodies of the opera. Camillo hears it, but takes it as a delusion of impassioned memory and a mere theme for the recurring melodious utterance of his regrets. Michiella hears it. She chimes with the third notes of Camillo's solo to inform us of her suspicions that they have a serpent among them. Leonardo hears it. The trio is formed. Count Orso, without hearing it, makes a quatuor by inviting the

bridal couple to go through the necessary formalities. The chorus changes its measure to one of hymeneals. The unknown voice closes it ominously with three bars in the minor key. Michiella stalks close around the ranked singers like an enraged daughter of Attila. Stopping in front of the veiled figure, she says—

“Why is it thou wearest the black veil at my nūptials?”

“Because my time of mourning is not yet ended.”

“Thou standest the shadow in my happiness.”

“The bright sun will have its shadow.”

“I desire that all rejoice this day.”

“My hour of rejoicing approaches.”

“Wilt thou unveil?”

“Dost thou ask to look the storm in the face?”

“Wilt thou unveil?”

“Art thou hungry for the lightning?”

“I bid thee unveil, woman!”

Michiella's ringing shriek of command produces no response.

“It is she!” cries Michiella, from a contracted bosom; smiting it with clenched hands.

“Swift to the signatures. O rival! what bitterness hast thou come hither to taste.”

Camilla sings aside: “If yet my husband loves me and is true.”

Count Orso exclaims: "Let trumpets sound for the commencement of the festivities. The lord of his country may slumber while his people dance and drink!"

Trumpets flourish. Witnesses are called about the table. Camillo, pen in hand, prepares for the supreme act. Leònardo at one wing watches the eagerness of Michiella. The chorus chants to a muted measure of suspense, while Camillo dips pen in ink.

"She is away from me: she scorns me: she is lost to me. Life without honour is the life of swine. Union without love is the yoke of savage beasts. O me miserable! Can the heavens themselves plumb the depth of my degradation?"

Count Orso permits a half-tone of paternal severity to point his kindly hint that time is passing. When he was young, he says, in the broad and benevolently frisky manner, he would have signed ere the eye of the maiden twinkled her affirmative, or the goose had shed its quill.

Camillo still trifles. Then he dashes the pen to earth.

"Never! I have but one wife. Our marriage is irrevocable. The dishonoured man is the everlasting outcast. What are earthly possessions to me, if within myself shame faces me? Let all go. Though

I have lost Camilla, I will be worthy of her. Not a pen—no pen; it is the sword that I must write with. Strike, O count! I am here: I stand alone. By the edge of this sword, I swear that never deed of mine shall rob Camilla of her heritage; though I die the death, she shall not weep for a craven!”

The multitude break away from Camilla—veiled no more, but radiant; fresh as a star that issues through corrupting vapours, and with her voice at a starry pitch in its clear ascendancy:—

“Tear up the insufferable scroll!—
O thou, my lover and my soul!
It is the Sword that reunites;
The Pen that our perdition writes.”

She is folded in her husband’s arms.

Michiella fronts them, horrid of aspect:—

“Accurst divorced one! dost thou dare
To lie in shameless fondness there?
Abandon’d! on thy lying brow
Thy name shall be imprinted now.”

Camilla parts from her husband’s embrace:—

“My name is one I do not fear;
’Tis one that thou would’st shrink to hear:
Go, cool thy penitential fires,
Thou creature, foul with base desires!”

CAMILLO (*facing Count Orso*).

“The choice is thine!”

COUNT ORSO (*draws*).

“The choice is made!”

CHORUS (*narrowing its circle*).

“Familiar is that naked blade.
Of others, of himself, the fate—
How swift 'tis Provocation's mate!”

MICHIELLA (*torn with jealous rage*).

“Yea; I could smite her on the face.
Father, first read the thing's disgrace.
I grudge them honourable death.
Put poison in their latest breath!”

ORSO (*his left arm extended*).

“You twain are sunder'd: hear with awe
The judgment of the Source of Law.”

CAMILLA (*smiling confidently*).

“Not such, when I was at the Source,
It said to me;—but take thy course.”

ORSO (*astounded*).

“Thither thy steps were bent?”

MICHIELLA (*spurning verbal controversy*).

“She feigns!

A thousand swords are in my veins.
Friends! soldiers! strike them down, the pair!”

CAMILLO (*on guard, clasping his wife*).

“'Tis well! I cry, to all we share.
Yea, life or death, 'tis well! 'tis well!”

MICHIELLA (*stamps her foot*).

“ My heart’s a vessel toss’d on hell ! ”

LEONARDO (*aside*).

“ Not in glad nuptials ends the day.”

ORSO (*to Camilla*).

“ What is thy purpose with us ?—say ! ”

CAMILLA (*lowly*).

“ Unto my Father I have cross’d
For tidings of my Mother lost.”

ORSO.

“ Thy mother dead ! ”

CAMILLA.

“ She lives ! ”

MICHIELLA.

“ Thou liest !

The tablets of the tomb defiest !
The Fates denounce, the Furies chase
The wretch who lies in Reason’s face.”

CAMILLA.

“ Fly, then ; for we are match’d to try
Which is the idiot, thou or I.”

MICHIELLA.

“ Graceless Camilla.”

ORSO.

“ Senseless girl :
I cherish’d thee a precious pearl,
And almost own’d thee child of mine.”

CAMILLA.

"Thou kept'st me like a gem, to shine,
Careless that I of blood am made;
No longer be the end delay'd.
'Tis time to prove I have a heart—
Forth from these walls of mine depart!
The ghosts within them are disturb'd :
Go forth, and let thy wrath be curb'd,
For I am strong : Camillo's truth
Has arm'd the visions of our youth.
Our union by the Head Supreme
Is blest: our severance was the dream.
We who have drunk of blood and tears,
Knew nothing of a mortal's fears.
Life is as Death until the strife
In our just cause makes Death as Life."

ORSO.

" 'Tis madness ? "

LEONARDO.

" Is it madness ? "

CAMILLA.

" Men !

'Tis Reason, but beyond your ken.
There lives a light that none can view
Whose thoughts are brutish :—seen by few,
The few have therefore light divine :
Their visions are God's legions !—sign,
I give you ; for we stand alone,
And you are frozen to the bone.
Your palsied hands refuse their swords.
A sharper edge is in my words,
A deadlier wound is in my cry.
Yea, tho' you slay us, do we die ?
In forcing us to bear the worst,
You made of us Immortals first.
Away ! and trouble not my sight."

Chorus of Cavaliers: RUDOLFO, ROMUALDO, ARNOLDO, and others.

“She moves us with an angel’s might.
What if his host outnumber ours?
’Tis Heaven that gives victorious powers.”

[*They draw their steel. ORSO, simulating gratitude for their devotion to him, addresses them as to pacify their friendly ardour.*]

MICHIELLA to LEONARDO (*supplicating*).

“Ever my friend! shall I appeal
In vain to see thy flashing steel?”

LEONARDO (*finally resolved*).

“Traitress! pray, rather, it may rest,
Or its first home will be thy breast.”

Chorus of Bridal Company.

“The flowers from bright Aurora’s head
We pluck’d to strew a happy bed.
Shall they be dipp’d in blood ere night?
Woe to the nuptials! woe the sight!”

Rudolfo, Romualdo, Arnolfo, and the others, advance towards Camillo. Michiella calls to them encouragingly that it were well for the deed to be done by their hands. They bid Camillo to direct their lifted swords upon his enemies. Leonardo joins them. Count Orso, after a burst of upbraidings, accepts Camillo’s offer of peace, and gives his bond to quit the castle. Michiella, gazing savagely at Camilla, entreats her for an utterance of her

triumphant scorn. She assures Camilla that she knows her feelings accurately.

“Now you think that I am overwhelmed; that I shall have a restless night, and lie, after all my crying’s over, with my hair spread out on my pillow, on either side my face, like green moss of a withered waterfall: you think you will bestow a little serpent of a gift from my stolen treasures to comfort me. You will comfort me with a lock of Camillo’s hair, that I may have it on my breast to-night, and dream, and wail, and writhe, and curse the air I breathe, and clasp the abominable emptiness like a thousand Camillas. Speak!”

The dagger is seen gleaming up Michiella’s wrist; she steps on in a bony triangle, faced for mischief: a savage Hunnish woman, with the hair of a goddess—the figure of a cat taking to its forepaws. Close upon Camilla she towers in her whole height, and crying thrice, swift as the assassin trebles his blow, “Speak,” to Camilla, who is fronting her mildly, she raises her arm, and the stilet flashes into Camilla’s bosom.

“Die then, and outrage me no more.”

Camilla staggers to her husband. Camillo receives her falling. Michiella, seized by Leonardo, pre-

sents a stiffened shape of vengeance with fierce white eyes and dagger aloft. There are many shouts, and there is silence.

CAMILLA, *supported by CAMILLO.*

“ If this is death, it is not hard to bear.
Your handkerchief drinks up my blood so fast
It seems to love it. Threads of my own hair
Are woven in it. ’Tis the one I cast
That midnight from my window, when you stood
Alone, and heaven seem’d to love you so !
I did not think to wet it with my blood
When next I toss’d it to my love below.”

CAMILLO (*cherishing her*).

“ Camilla, pity ! say you will not die.
Your voice is like a soul lost in the sky.”

CAMILLA.

“ I know not if my soul has flown ; I know
My body is a weight I cannot raise :
My voice between them issues, and I go
Upon a journey of uncounted days.
Forgetfulness is like a closing sea ;
But you are very bright above me still.
My life I give as it was given to me :
I enter on a darkness wide and chill.”

CAMILLO.

“ O noble heart ! a million fires consume
The hateful hand that sends you to your doom.”

CAMILLA.

“There is an end to joy : there is no end
To striving ; therefore, ever let us strive
In purity that shall the toil befriend,
And keep our poor mortality alive.
I hang upon the boundaries like light
Along the hills when downward goes the day ;
I feel the silent creeping up of night.
For you, my husband, lies a flaming way.”

CAMILLO.

“I lose your eyes : I lose your voice : 'tis faint.
Ah, Christ ! see the fall'n eyelids of a saint.”

CAMILLA.

“Our life is but a little holding, lent
To do a mighty labour : we are one
With heaven and the stars when it is spent
To serve God's aim : else die we with the sun.”

She sinks. Camillo droops his head above her.

The house was hushed as at a veritable death-scene. It was more like a cathedral service than an operatic pageant. Agostino had done his best to put the heart of the creed of his chief into these last verses. Rocco's music floated them in solemn measures, and Vittoria had been careful to articulate throughout the sacred monotony so that their full meaning should be taken.

In the printed book of the libretto a chorus of cavaliers, followed by one harmless verse of Camilla's

adieux to them, and to her husband and life, concluded the opera.

“Let her stop at that—it’s enough!—and she shall be untouched,” said General Pierson to Antonio-Pericles. “I have information, as you know, that an extremely impudent song is coming.”

The General saw Wilfrid hanging about the lobby, in flagrant disobedience to orders. Rebuking his nephew with a frown, he commanded the lieutenant to make his way round to the stage and see that the curtain was dropped according to the printed book.

“Off, *mon Dieu!* off!” Pericles speeded him; adding in English, “Shall she taste prison-damp, zat voice is killed.”

The chorus of cavaliers was a lamentation: the key-note being despair: ordinary libretto verses.

Camilla’s eyes unclosed. She struggles to be lifted, and, raised on Camillo’s arm, she sings as with the last pulsation of her voice, softly resonant in its rich contralto. She pardons Michiella. She tells Count Orso that when he has extinguished his appetite for dominion, he will enjoy an unknown pleasure in the friendship of his neighbours. Repeating that her mother lives, and will some day kneel by her daughter’s grave—not mournfully, but in beatitude—she utters her adieu to all.

At the moment of her doing so, Montini whispered in Vittoria's ear. She looked up and beheld the downward curl of the curtain. There was confusion at the wings: Croats were visible to the audience. Carlo Ammiani and Luciano Romara jumped on the stage; a dozen of the noble youths of Milan streamed across the boards to either wing, and caught the curtain descending. The whole house had risen insurgent with cries of "Vittoria." The curtain-ropes were in the hands of the Croats, but Carlo, Luciano, and their fellows, held the curtain aloft at arm's length at each side of her. She was seen, and she sang, and the house listened.

The Italians present, one and all, rose up reverently and murmured the refrain. Many of the aristocracy would, doubtless, have preferred that this public declaration of the plain enigma should not have rung forth to carry them on the popular current; and some might have sympathised with the insane grin which distorted the features of Antonio-Pericles, when he beheld illusion wantonly destroyed, and the opera reduced to be a mere vehicle for a fulmination of politics. But the general enthusiasm was too tremendous to permit of individual protestations. To sit, when the nation was standing, was to be a German. Nor, indeed, was there an Italian in the house

who would willingly have consented to see Vittoria silenced, now that she had chosen to defy the Tedeschi from the boards of La Scala. The fascination of her voice extended even over the German division of the audience. They, with the Italians, said: "Hear her! hear her!" The curtain was agitated at the wings, but in the centre it was kept above Vittoria's head by the uplifted arms of the twelve young men:—

" I cannot count the years,
That you will drink, like me,
The cup of blood and tears,
Ere she to you appears :—

Italia, Italia shall be free ! "

So the great name was out, and its enemies had heard it.

" You dedicate your lives
To her, and you will be
The food on which she thrives,
Till her great day arrives —

Italia, Italia shall be free !

" She asks you but for faith !
Your faith in her takes she
As draughts of heaven's breath,
Amid defeat and death :—

Italia, Italia shall be free ! "

The prima donna was not acting exhaustion when

sinking lower in Montini's arms. Her bosom rose and sank quickly, and she gave the terminating verse:—

“ I enter the black boat
 Upon the wide grey sea,
 Where all her set suns float ;
 Thence hear my voice remote :—

Italia, Italia shall be free ! ”

The curtain dropped.

CHAPTER XXII.

WILFRID COMES FORWARD.

AN order for the immediate arrest of Vittoria was brought round to the stage at the fall of the curtain by Captain Weisspriess, and delivered by him on the stage to the officer commanding, a pothered lieutenant of Croats, whose first proceeding was dictated by the military instinct to get his men in line, and who was utterly devoid of any subsequent idea. The thunder of the house on the other side of the curtain was enough to disconcert a youngster such as he was; nor have the subalterns of Croat regiments a very signal reputation for efficiency in the Austrian service. Vittoria stood among her supporters apart; pale, and "only very thirsty," as she told the enthusiastic youths who pressed near her, and implored her to have no fear. Carlo was on her right hand; Luciano on her left. They kept her from going off to her room. Montini was despatched to fetch her

maid Giacinta with cloak and hood for her mistress. The young lieutenant of Croats drew his sword, but hesitated. Weisspriess, Wilfrid, and Major de Pyrmont were at one wing, between the Italian gentlemen and the soldiery. The operative company had fallen into the background, or stood crowding the side places of exit. Vittoria's name was being shouted with that angry, sea-like, horrid monotony of iteration which is more suggestive of menacing impatience and the positive will of the people, than varied, sharp, imperative calls. The people had got the lion in their throats. One shriek from her would bring them, like a torrent, on the boards, as the officers well knew; and every second's delay in executing the orders of the general added to the difficulty of their position. The lieutenant of Croats strode up to Weisspriess and Wilfrid, who were discussing a plan of action vehemently; while, amid hubbub and argument, De Pyrmont studied Vittoria's features through his opera-glass, with an admirable simple languor.

Wilfrid turned back to him, and De Pyrmont, without altering the level of his glass, said, "She's as cool as a lemon ice. That girl will be a mother of heroes. To have volcanic fire and the mastery of her nerves at the same time, is something prodigious. She is magnificent. Take a peep at her. I suspect

that the rascal at her right is seizing his occasion to plant a trifle or so in her memory—the animal! It's just the moment, and he knows it."

De Pymont looked at Wilfrid's face.

"Have I hit you anywhere accidentally?" he asked, for the face had grown dead-white.

"Be my friend, for Heaven's sake!" was the choking answer. "Save her! Get her away! She is an old acquaintance of mine—of mine, in England. Do; or I shall have to break my sword."

"You know her? and you don't go over to her?" said De Pymont.

"I—yes, she knows me."

"Then, why not present yourself?"

"Get her away. Talk Weisspriess down. He is for seizing her at all hazards. It's madness to provoke a conflict. Just listen to the house! I may be broken, but save her I will. De Pymont, on my honour, I will stand by you for ever if you will help me to get her away."

"To suggest my need in the hour of your own is not a bad notion," said the cool Frenchman. "What plan have you?"

Wilfrid struck his forehead miserably.

"Stop Lieutenant Zettlich. Don't let him go up to her. Don't——"

De Pymont beheld in astonishment that a speechlessness such as affects condemned wretches in the supreme last minutes of existence had come upon the Englishman.

"I'm afraid yours is a bad case," he said; "and the worst of it is, it's just the case women have no compassion for. Here comes a parlementaire from the opposite camp. Let's hear him."

It was Luciano Romara. He stood before them to request that the curtain should be raised. The officers debated together, and deemed it prudent to yield consent.

Luciano stipulated further that the soldiers were to be withdrawn.

"On one wing, or on both wings?" said Captain Weisspriess, twinkling eyes oblique.

"Out of the house," said Luciano.

The officers laughed.

"You must confess," said De Pymont, affably, "that though the drum does issue command to the horse, it scarcely thinks of doing so after a rent in the skin has shown its emptiness. Can you suppose that we are likely to run when we see you empty-handed? These things are matters of calculation."

"It is for you to calculate correctly," said Luciano.

As he spoke, a first surge of the exasperated house

broke upon the stage and smote the curtain, which burst into white zig-zags, as it were a breast stricken with panic.

Giacinta came running in to her mistress, and cloaked and hooded her hurriedly.

Enamoured, impassioned, Ammiani murmured in Vittoria's ear: "My own soul!"

She replied: "My lover!"

So their first love-speech was interchanged with Italian simplicity, and made a divine circle about them in the storm.

Luciano returned to his party to inform them that they held the key of the emergency.

"Stick fast," he said. "None of you move. Whoever takes the first step takes the false step; I see that."

"We have no arms, Luciano."

"We have the people behind us."

There was a fiercer tempest in the body of the house, and, on a sudden, silence. Men who had invaded the stage joined the Italian guard surrounding Vittoria, telling that the lights had been extinguished; and then came the muffled uproar of universal confusion. Some were for handing her down into the orchestra, and getting her out through the general vomitorium, but Carlo and Luciano held her firmly by them. The theatre was a raging darkness;

and there was barely a light on the stage. "Santa Maria!" cried Giacinta, "how dreadful that steel does look in the dark! I wish our sweet boys would cry louder." Her mistress, almost laughing, bade her keep close and be still. "Oh! this must be like being at sea," the poor creature whined, stopping her ears and shutting her eyes. Vittoria was in a thick gathering of her defenders; she could just hear that a parley was going on between Luciano and the Austrians. Luciano made his way back to her. "Quick," he said; "nothing cowers a mob like darkness. One of these officers tells me he knows you, and gives his word of honour—he's an Englishman—to conduct you out: come."

Vittoria placed her hands in Carlo's one instant. Luciano cleared a space for them. She heard a low English voice.

"You do not recognise me? There is no time to lose. You had another name once, and I have had the honour to call you by it."

"Are you an Austrian?" she exclaimed, and Carlo felt that she was shrinking back.

"I am the Wilfrid Pole whom you knew, I think. You are entrusted to my charge; I have sworn to conduct you to the doors in safety, whatever it may cost me."

Vittoria looked at him mournfully. Her eyes filled with tears. "The night is spoiled for me!" she murmured.

"Emilia!"

"That is not my name."

"I know you by no other. Have mercy on me. I would do anything in the world to serve you."

Major de Pyrmont came up to him and touched his arm. He said briefly: "We shall have a collision, to a certainty, unless the people hear from one of her set that she is out of the house."

Wilfrid requested her to confide her hand to him.

"My hand is engaged," she said.

Bowing ceremoniously, Wilfrid passed on, and Vittoria, with Carlo and Luciano and her maid Giacinta, followed between files of bayonets through the dusky passages, and down stairs into the night air.

Vittoria spoke in Carlo's ear: "I have been unkind to him. I had a great affection for him in England."

"Thank him; thank him," said Carlo.

She quitted her lover's side and went up to Wilfrid with a shyly extended hand. A carriage was drawn up by the kerbstone; the doors of it were open. She had barely made a word intelligible,

when Major de Pymont pointed to some general officers approaching. "Get her out of the way while there's time," he said in French to Luciano. "This is her carriage. Swiftly, gentlemen, or she's lost."

Giacinta read his meaning by signs, and caught her mistress by the sleeve, using force. She and Major de Pymont placed Vittoria, bewildered, in the carriage; De Pymont shut the door, and signalled to the coachman. Vittoria thrust her head out for a last look at her lover, and beheld him with the arms of dark-clothed men upon him. La Scala was pouring forth its occupants in struggling roaring shoals from every door. Her outcry returned to her deadened in the rapid rolling of the carriage across the lighted Piazza. Giacinta had to hold her down with all her might. Great clamour was for one moment heard by them, and then a rushing voicelessness. Giacinta screamed to the coachman till she was exhausted. Vittoria sank shuddering on the lap of her maid, hiding her face that she might plunge out of recollection. The lightnings shot across her brain, but wrote no legible thing; the scenes of the opera lost their outlines as in a white heat of fire. She tried to weep, and vainly asked her heart for tears, that this dry, dreadful blind misery of mere sensation might be washed out of her, and leave her

mind clear to grapple with evil ; and then, as the lurid breaks come in a storm-driven night sky, she had the picture of her lover in the hands of enemies, and of Wilfrid in the white uniform ; the torment of her living passion, the mockery of her passion by-gone. Recollection, when it came back, overwhelmed her ; she swayed from recollection to oblivion, and was like a caged wild thing. Giacinta had to be as a mother with her. The poor trembling girl, who had begun to perceive that the carriage was bearing them to some unknown destination, tore open the bands of her corset and drew her mistress's head against the full warmth of her bosom, rocked her, and moaned over her, mixing comfort and lamentation in one offering, and so contrived to draw the tears out from her,—a storm of tears ; not fitfully hysterical, but tears that poured a black veil over the eyeballs, and fell steadily streaming. Once subdued by the weakness, Vittoria's nature melted ; she shook piteously with weeping ; she remembered Laura's words, and thought of what she had done, in terror and remorse, and tried to ask if the people would be fighting now, but could not. Laura seemed to stand before her like a Fury stretching her finger towards the dear brave men whom she had hurled upon the bayonets and the guns. It was an unendurable

anguish. Giacinta was compelled to let her cry, and had to reflect upon their present situation unaided. They had passed the city-gates. Voices on the coachman's box had given German pass-words. She would have screamed then had not the carriage seemed to her a sanctuary from such creatures as foreign soldiers, whitecoats; so she cowered on. They were in the starry open country, on the high-road between the vine-hung mulberry trees. She held the precious head of her mistress, praying the saints that strength would soon come to her to talk of their plight, or chatter a little comfortingly, at least; and but for the singular sweetness which it shot thrilling to her woman's heart, she would have been fretted when Vittoria, after one long-drawn wavering sob, turned her lips to the bared warm breast, and put a little kiss upon it, and slept.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FIRST HOURS OF THE FLIGHT.

VITTORIA slept on like an outworn child, while Giacinta nodded over her, and started, and wondered what embowelled mountain they might be passing through, so cold was the air and thick the darkness; and wondered more at the old face of dawn, which appeared to know nothing of her agitation. But morning was better than night, and she ceased counting over her sins forwards and backwards; adding comments on them, excusing some and admitting the turpitude of others, with "Oh! I was naughty, padre mio! I was naughty:"—she huddled them all into one of memory's spare sacks, and tied the neck of it, that they should keep safe for her father-confessor. At such times, after a tumult of the blood, women have tender delight in one another's beauty. Giacinta doated on the marble cheek, upturned on her lap, with the black unbound locks slipping across it; the

braid of the coronal of hair loosening ; the chance flitting movement of the little pearly dimple that lay at the edge of the bow of the joined lips, like the cradling hollow of a dream. At whiles it would twitch ; yet the dear eyelids continued sealed. Looking at shut eyelids when you love the eyes beneath, is more or less a teasing mystery that draws down your mouth to kiss them. Their lashes seem to answer you in some way with infantine provocation ; and fine eyelashes upon a face bent sideways, suggest a kind of internal smiling. Giacinta looked till she could bear it no longer ; she kissed the cheek, and crooned over it, gladdened by a sense of jealous possession when she thought of the adored thing her mistress had been over-night. One of her hugs awoke Vittoria, who said, "Shut my window, mother," and slept again fast. Giacinta saw that they were nearer to the mountains. Mountain-shadows were thrown out, and long lank shadows of cypresses that climbed up reddish-yellow undulations, told of the sun coming. The sun threw a blaze of light into the carriage. He shone like a good friend, and helped Giacinta to think, as she had already been disposed to imagine, that the machinery by which they had been caught out of Milan was amicable magic after all, and not to be screamed at. The sound medicine of sleep and

sunlight was restoring livelier colour to her mistress Giacinta hushed her now, but Vittoria's eyes opened, and settled on her, full of repose.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked.

"Signorina, my own, I was thinking whether those people I see on the hill-sides are as fond of coffee as I am."

Vittoria sat up and tumbled questions out headlong, pressing her eyes and gathering her senses; she shook with a few convulsions, but shed no tears. It was rather the discomfort of their position than any vestige of alarm which prompted Giacinta to project her head and interrogate the coachman and chasseur. She drew back, saying, "Holy Virgin! they are Germans. We are to stop in half-an-hour." With that she put her hands to use in arranging and smoothing Vittoria's hair and dress—the dress of *Camilla*—of which triumphant heroine Vittoria felt herself an odd little ghost now. She changed her seat that she might look towards Milan. A letter was spied fastened with a pin to one of the cushions. She opened it, and read in pencil writing:—

"Go quietly. You have done all that you could do for good or for ill. The carriage will take you to a safe place, where you will soon see your friends and hear the news. Wait till you reach Meran. You

will see a friend from England. Avoid the lion's jaw a second time. Here you compromise everybody. Submit, or your friends will take you for a mad girl. Be satisfied. *It is an Austrian who rescues you.* Think yourself no longer appointed to put match to powder. Drown yourself if a second frenzy comes. I feel I could still love your body if the obstinate soul were out of it. You know who it is that writes. I might sign 'Michiella' to this: I have a sympathy with her anger at the provoking Camilla. Addio! From La Scala."

The lines read as if Laura were uttering them. Wrapping her cloak across the silken opera garb, Vittoria leaned back passively until the carriage stopped at a village inn, where Giacinta made speedy arrangements to satisfy as far as possible her mistress's queer predilection for bathing her whole person daily in cold water. The household service of the inn recovered from the effort to assist her sufficiently to produce hot coffee and sweet bread, and new green-streaked stracchino, the cheese of the district, which was the morning meal of the fugitives. Giacinta, who had never been so thirsty in her life, became intemperately refreshed, and was seized by the fatal desire to do something: to do what she could not tell; but chancing to see that her mistress

had silken slippers on her feet, she protested loudly that stouter foot-gear should be obtained for her, and ran out to circulate inquiries concerning a shoemaker who might have a pair of country overshoes for sale. She returned to say that the coachman and his comrade, the German chasseur, were drinking and watering their horses, and were not going to start until after a rest of two hours, and that she proposed to walk to a small Bergamasc town within a couple of miles of the village, where the shoes could be obtained, and perhaps a stuff to replace the silken dress. Receiving consent, Giacinta whispered, "A man outside wishes to speak to you, signorina. Don't be frightened. He pounced on me at the end of the village, and had as little breath to speak as a boy in love. He was behind us all last night on the carriage. He mentioned you by name. He is quite commonly dressed, but he's a gallant gentleman, and exactly like our signor Carlo. My dearest lady, he'll be company for you while I am absent. May I beckon him to come into the room?"

Vittoria supposed at once that this was a smoothing of the way for the entrance of her lover and her joy. She stood up, letting all her strength go that he might the more justly take her and cherish her. But it was not Carlo who entered. So dead fell her

baffled hope that her face was repellent with the effort she made to support herself. He said, "I address the signorina Vittoria. I am a relative of Countess Ammiani. My name is Angelo Guidascarpi. Last night I was evading the sbirri in this disguise by the private door of La Scala, from which I expected Carlo to come forth. I saw him seized in mistake for me. I jumped up on the empty box seat behind your carriage. Before we entered the village I let myself down. If I am seen and recognised, I am lost, and great evil will befall Countess Ammiani and her son; but if they are unable to confront Carlo and me, my escape ensures his safety."

"What can I do?" said Vittoria.

He replied, "Shall I answer you by telling you what I have done?"

"You need not, signore."

"Enough that I want to keep a sword fresh for my country. I am at your mercy, signorina; and I am without anxiety. I heard the chasseur saying at the door of La Scala that he had the night-pass for the city gates and orders for the Tyrol. Once in the Tyrol I leap into Switzerland. I should have remained in Milan, but nothing will be done there yet, and quiet cities are not homes for me."

Vittoria began to admit the existence of his likeness

to her lover, though it seemed to her a guilty weakness that she should see it.

"*Will* nothing be done in Milan?" was her first eager question.

"Nothing, signorina, or I should be there, and safe."

"What, signore, do you require me to help you in?"

"Say that I am your servant."

"And take you with me?"

"Such is my petition."

"Is the case very urgent?"

"Hardly more, as regards myself, than a sword lost to Italy if I am discovered. But, signorina, from what Countess Ammiani has told me, I believe that you will some day be *my* relative likewise. Therefore, I appeal not only to a charitable lady, but to one of my own family."

Vittoria reddened. "All that I can do I will do."

Angelo had to assure her that Carlo's release was certain the moment his identity was established. She breathed gladly, saying, "I wonder at it all very much. I do not know where they are carrying me, but I think I am in friendly hands. I owe you a duty. You will permit me to call you Beppo till our journey ends."

They were attracted to the windows by a noise of a horseman drawing rein under it, whose imperious shout for the innkeeper betrayed the soldier's habit of exacting prompt obedience from civilians, though there was no military character in his attire. The innkeeper and his wife came out to the summons, and then both made way for the chasseur in attendance on Vittoria. With this man the cavalier conversed.

"Have you had food?" said Vittoria. "I have some money that will serve for both of us three days. Go, and eat and drink. Pay for us both."

She gave him her purse. He received it with a grave servitorial bow, and retired.

Soon afterwards the chasseur brought up a message. Herr Johannes requested that he might have the honour of presenting his homage to her: it was imperative that he should see her. She nodded. Her first glance at Herr Johannes assured her of his being one of the officers whom she had seen on the stage last night, and she prepared to act her part. Herr Johannes desired her to recall to mind his introduction to her by the Signor Antonio-Pericles at the house of the maestro, Rocco Ricci. "It is true; pardon me," said Vittoria.

He informed her that she had surpassed herself at the opera; so much so that he and many other Ger-

mans had been completely conquered by her. Hearing, he said, that she was to be pursued, he took horse and galloped all night on the road towards Schloss Sonnenberg, whither, as it had been whispered to him, she was flying, in order to counsel her to lie *perdu* for a short space, and subsequently to conduct her to the schloss of the amiable duchess. Vittoria thanked him, but stated humbly that she preferred to travel alone. He declared that it was impossible; that she was precious to the world of art, and must on no account be allowed to run into peril. Vittoria tried to assert her will; she found it unstrung. She thought, besides, that this disguised officer, with the ill-looking eyes running into one, might easily, since he had heard her, be a devotee of her voice; and it flattered her yet more to imagine him as a capture from the enemy—a vanquished subservient Austrian. She had seen him come on horseback; he had evidently followed her; and he knew what she now understood must be her destination. Moreover, Laura had underlined "*it is an Austrian who rescues you.*" This man perchance was the Austrian. His precise manner of speech demanded an extreme repugnance, if it was to be resisted; Vittoria's reliance upon her own natural fortitude was much too secure for her to encourage the physical

revulsions which certain hard faces of men create in the hearts of young women.

"Was all quiet in Milan?" she asked.

"Quiet as a pillow," he said.

"And will continue to be?"

"Not a doubt of it."

"Why is there not a doubt of it, signore?"

"You beat us Germans on one field. On the other you have no chance. But you must lose no time. The Croats are on your track. I have ordered out the carriage."

The mention of the Croats struck her fugitive senses with a panic.

"I must wait for my maid," she said, attempting to deliberate.

"Ha! you have a maid: of course you have! Where is your maid?"

"She ought to have returned by this time. If not, she is on the road."

"On the road? Good; we will pick up the maid on the road. We have not a minute to spare. Lady, I am your obsequious servant. Hasten out, I beg of you. I was taught at my school that minutes are not to be wasted. Those Croats have been drinking and what not on the way, or they would have been here before this. You can't rely on Italian innkeepers to conceal you."

"Signore, are you a man of honour?"

"Illustrious lady, I am."

She listened simply to the response without giving heed to the prodigality of gesture. The necessity for flight now that Milan was announced as lying quiet, had become her sole thought. Angelo was standing by the carriage.

"What man is this?" said Herr Johannes, frowning.

"He is my servant," said Vittoria.

"My dear good lady, you told me your servant was a maid. This will never do. We can't have him."

"Excuse me, signore, I never travel without him."

"Travel! This is not a case of travelling, but running; and when you run, if you are in earnest about it, you must fling away your baggage and arms."

Herr Johannes tossed out his moustache to right and left, and stamped his foot. He insisted that the man should be left behind.

"Off, sir! back to Milan, or elsewhere," he cried.

"Beppo, mount on the box," said Vittoria.

Her command was instantly obeyed. Herr Johannes looked her in the face. "You are very decided, my dear lady." He seemed to have lost his

own decision, but handing Vittoria in, he drew a long cigar from his breast-pocket, lit it, and mounted beside the coachman. The chasseur had disappeared.

Vittoria entreated that a general look-out should be kept for Giacinta. The road was straight up an ascent, and she had no fear that her maid would not be seen. Presently there was a view of the violet domes of a city. "Is it Bergamo?—is it Brescia?" she longed to ask, thinking of her Bergamasc and Brescian friends, and of those two places famous for the bravery of their sons: one being especially dear to her, as the birthplace of a genius of melody, whose blood was in her veins. "Did he look on these mulberry trees?—did he look on these green-grassed valleys?—did he hear these falling waters?" she asked herself, and closed her spirit with reverential thoughts of him and with his music. She saw sadly that they were turning from the city. A little ball of paper was shot into her lap. She opened it and read: "An officer of the cavalry.—BEPPO." She put her hand out of the window to signify that she was awake to the situation. Her anxiety, however, began to fret. No sight of Giacinta was to be had in any direction. Her mistress commenced chiding the absent garrulous creature, and did so until she pitied

her, when she accused herself of cowardice, for she was incapable of calling out to the coachman to stop. The rapid motion subdued such energy as remained to her, and she willingly allowed her hurried feelings to rest on the faces of rocks impending over long ravines, and of perched old castles and white villas and sub-Alpine herds. She burst from the fascination as from a dream, but only to fall into it again, reproaching her weakness, and saying, "What a thing am I!" When she did make her voice heard by Herr Johannes and the coachman, she was nervous and ashamed, and met the equivocating pacification of the reply with an assent half-way, though she was far from comprehending the consolation she supposed that it was meant to convey. She put out her hand to communicate with Beppo. Another ball of pencilled writing answered to it. She read: "Keep watch on this Austrian. Your maid is two hours in the rear. Refuse to be separated from me. My life is at your service.—BEPP0."

Vittoria made her final effort to get a resolve of some sort; ending it with a compassionate exclamation over poor Giacinta. The girl could soon find her way back to Milan. On the other hand, the farther from Milan, the less the danger to Carlo's relative, in whom she now perceived a stronger like-

ness to her lover. She sank back in the carriage and closed her eyes. Though she smiled at the vanity of forcing sleep in this way, sleep came. Her healthy frame seized its natural medicine to rebuild her after the fever of recent days.

She slept till the rocks were purple, and rose-purple mists were in the valleys. The stopping of the carriage aroused her. They were at the threshold of a large wayside hostelry, fronting a slope of forest and a plunging brook. Whitecoats in all attitudes leaned about the door; she beheld the inner court full of them. Herr Johannes was ready to hand her to the ground. He said: "You have nothing to fear. These fellows are on the march to Cremona. Perhaps it will be better if you are served up in your chamber. You will be called early in the morning."

She thanked him, and felt grateful. "Beppo, look to yourself," she said, and ran to her retirement.

"I fancy that's about all that you are fit for," Herr Johannes remarked, with his eyes on the impersonator of Beppo, who bore the scrutiny carelessly, and after seeing that Vittoria had left nothing on the carriage-seats, directed his steps towards the kitchen as became his functions. Herr Johannes beckoned to a Tyrolese maid-servant, of whom Beppo had asked his way. She gave her name as Kätchen.

“Kätchen, Kätchen, my sweet chuck,” said Herr Johannes, “here are ten florins for you, in silver, if you will get me the handkerchief of that man: you have just stretched your finger out for him.”

According to the common Austrian reckoning of them, Herr Johannes had adopted the right method for ensuring the devotion of the maidens of Tyrol. She responded with an amazed gulp of her mouth and a grimace of acquiescence. Ten florins in silver shortened the migratory term of the mountain girl by full three months. Herr Johannes asked her the hour when the officers in command had supper, and deferred his own meal till that time. Kätchen set about earning her money. With any common Beppo it would have been easy enough—simple barter for a harmless kiss. But this Beppo appeared inaccessible; he was so courtly and so reserved; nor is a maiden of Tyrol a particularly skilled seductress. The supper of the officers was smoking on the table, when Herr Johannes presented himself among them, and very soon the inn was shaken with an uproar of greeting. Kätchen found Beppo listening at the door of the *salle*. She clapped her hands upon him to drag him away.

“What right have you to be leaning your head there?” she said, and threatened to make his pro-

ceedings known. Beppo had no jewel to give, little money to spare. He had just heard Herr Johannes welcomed among the officers by a name that half paralysed him. "You shall have anything you ask of me if you will find me out in a couple of hours," he said. Kätchen nodded truce for that period, and saw her home in the Oberinnthal still nearer—twelve mountain goats and a cow her undisputed property. She found him out, though he had strayed through the court of the inn, and down a hanging garden to the borders of a torrent that drenched the air and sounded awfully in the dark ravine below. He embraced her very mildly. "One scream and you go," he said; she felt the saving hold of her feet plucked from her, with all the sinking horror, and bit her under lip, as if keeping in the scream with bare stitches. When he released her she was perfectly mastered. "You do play tricks," she said, and quaked.

"I play no tricks. Tell me at what hour these soldiers march."

"At two in the morning."

"Don't be afraid, silly child: you're safe if you obey me. At what time has our carriage been ordered?"

"At four."

"Now, swear to do this:—rouse my mistress at a quarter past two: bring her down to me."

"Yes, yes," said Kätchen, eagerly: "give me your handkerchief, and she will follow me. I do swear; that I do; by big St. Christopher! who's painted on the walls of our house at home."

Beppo handed her sweet silver, which played a lively tune for her temporarily-vanished cow and goats. Peering at her features in the starlight, he let her take the handkerchief from his pocket.

"Oh! what have you got in there?" she said.

He laid his finger across her mouth, bidding her return to the house.

"Dear Heaven!" Kätchen went in murmuring; "would I have gone out to that soft-looking young man if I had known he was a devil."

Angelo Guidascarpi was aware that an officer without responsibility never sleeps faster than when his brothers-in-arms have to be obedient to the reveillée. At two in the morning the bugle rang out: many lighted cigars were flashing among the dark passages of the inn; the whitecoats were disposed in marching order; hot coffee was hastily swallowed; the last stragglers from the stables, the outhouses, the court, and the straw beds under roofs of rock, had gathered to the main body. The march set forward. A pair

of officers sent a shout up to the drowsy windows, "Good luck to you, Weisspriess!" Angelo descended from the concealment of the opposite trees, where he had stationed himself to watch the departure. The inn was like a sleeper who has turned over. He made Kätchen bring him bread and slices of meat and a flask of wine, which things found a place in his pockets; and paying for his mistress and himself, he awaited Vittoria's foot on the stairs. When Vittoria came she asked no questions, but said to Kätchen, "You may kiss me;" and Kätchen began crying; she believed that they were lovers daring everything for love.

"You have a clear start of an hour and a half. Leave the high-road then, and turn left through the forest and ask for Bormio. If you reach Tyrol, and come to Silz, tell people that you know Kätchen Giesslinger, and they will be kind to you."

So saying, she let them out into the black-eyed starlight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ADVENTURES OF VITTORIA AND ANGELO.

NOTHING was distinguishable for the flying couple save the high-road winding under rock and forest, and here and there a coursing water in the depths of the ravines that showed like a vein in black marble. They walked swiftly, keeping brisk ears for sound of hoof or foot behind them. Angelo promised her that she should rest after the morning light had come; but she assured him that she could bear fatigue, and her firm cheerfulness lent his heart vigour. At times they were hooded with the darkness, which came on them as if, as benighted children fancy, their faces were about to meet the shaggy breast of the forest. Rising up to lighter air, they had sight of distant twinklings: it might be city, or autumn weed, or fires the woodmen, or beacon fires: they glimmered like eyelets to the mystery of the vast unseen land. Innumerable brooks went talking to the night: torrents

in seasons of rain ; childish voices now, with endless involutions of a song of three notes and a sort of unnoted clanging chorus, as if a little one sang and would sing on through the thumping of a tambourine and bells. Vittoria had these fancies : Angelo had none. He walked like a hunted man whose life is at stake.

“If we reach a village soon we may get some conveyance,” he said.

“I would rather walk than ride,” said Vittoria ; “it keeps me from thinking.”

“There is the dawn, signorina.”

Vittoria frightened him by taking a seat upon a bench of rock ; while it was still dark about them, she drew off Camilla’s silken shoes and stockings, and stood on bare feet.

“You fancied I was tired,” she said. “No, I am thrifty ; and I want to save as much of my finery as I can. I can go very well on naked feet. These shoes are no protection ; they would be worn out in half a day, and spoilt for decent wearing in another hour.”

The sight of fair feet upon hard earth troubled Angelo ; he excused himself for calling her out to endure hardship ; but she said, “I trust you entirely.” She looked up at the first thin wave of colour while walking.

"You do not know me," said he.

"You are the Countess Ammiani's nephew."

"I have, as I had the honour to tell you yesterday, the blood of your lover in my veins."

"Do not speak of him now I pray," said Vittoria ;
"I want my strength."

"Signorina, the man we have left behind us is his enemy ;—mine. I would rather see you dead than alive in his hands. Do you fear death ?"

"Sometimes ; when I am half awake," she confessed.
"I dislike thinking of it."

He asked her curiously : "Have you never seen it?"

"Death?" said she, and changed a shudder to a smile ; "I died last night."

Angelo smiled with her. "I saw you die."

"It seems a hundred years ago."

"Or half-a-dozen minutes. The heart counts everything."

"Was I very much liked by the people, Signor Angelo?"

"They love you."

"I have done them no good."

"Every possible good. And now, mine is the duty to protect you."

"And yesterday we were strangers! Signor Angelo, you spoke of sbirri. There is no rising in

Bologna. Why are they after you? You look too gentle to give them cause."

"Do I look gentle? But what I carry is no burden. Who that saw you last night would know you for Camilla? You will hear of my deeds, and judge. We shall soon have men upon the road; you must be hidden. See, there: there are our colours in the sky. Austria cannot wipe them out. Since I was a boy, I have always slept in a bed facing east, to keep that truth before my eyes. Black and yellow drop to the earth: green, white, and red, mount to heaven. If more of my countrymen saw these meanings!—but they are learning to. My tutor called them Germanisms. If so, I have stolen a jewel from my enemy."

Vittoria mentioned the chief.

"Yes," said Angelo; "he has taught us to read God's handwriting. I revere him. It's odd; I always fancy I hear his voice from a dungeon, and seeing him looking at one light. He has a fault: he does not comprehend the feelings of a nobleman. Do you think he has made a convert of our Carlo in that? Never! High blood is ineradicable."

"I am not of high blood," said Vittoria.

"Countess Ammiani overlooks it. And besides, low blood may be elevated without the intervention

of a miracle. You have a noble heart, signorina. It may be the will of God that you should perpetuate our race. All of us save Carlo Ammiani, seem to be falling."

Vittoria bent her head, distressed by a broad beam of sunlight. The country undulating to the plain lay under them, the great Alps above, and much covert on all sides. They entered a forest pathway, following chance for safety. The dark leafage and low green roofing tasted sweeter to their senses than clear air and sky. Dark woods are homes to fugitives, and here there was soft footing, a surrounding gentleness,—grass, and moss with dead leaves peacefully flat on it. The birds were not timorous, and when a lizard or a snake slipped away from her feet, it was amusing to Vittoria, and did not hurt her tenderness to see that they were feared. Threading on beneath the trees, they wound by a valley's incline, where tumbled stones blocked the course of a green water, and filled the lonely place with one onward voice. When the sun stood over the valley they sat beneath a chestnut tree in a semicircle of orange rock to eat the food which Angelo had procured at the inn. He poured out wine for her in the hollow of a stone, deep as an egg-shell, whereat she sipped, smiling at simple contrivances; but no smile crossed the face

of Angelo. He ate and drank to sustain his strength, as a weapon is sharpened; and having done, he gathered up what was left, and lay at her feet with his eyes fixed upon an old grey stone. She, too, sat brooding. The endless babble and noise of the water had hardened the sense of its being a life in that solitude. The floating of a hawk overhead scarce had the character of an animated thing. Angelo turned round to look at her, and looking upward as he lay, his sight was smitten by spots of blood upon one of her torn white feet, that was but half-nestled in the folds of her dress. Bending his head down like a bird beaking at prey, he kissed the foot passionately. Vittoria's eyelids ran up: a chord seemed to snap within her ears: she stole the shamed foot into concealment, and throbbed, but not fearfully, for Angelo's forehead was on the earth. Clumps of grass, and sharp flint-dust stuck between his fists, which were thrust out stiff on either side of him. She heard him groan heavily. When he raised his face, it was white as madness. Her womanly nature did not shrink from caressing it with a touch of soothing hands.

She chanced to say, "I am your sister."

"No, by God! you are not my sister," cried the young man. "She died without a stain of blood; a

lily from head to foot, and went into the vault so. Our mother will see that. She will kiss the girl in heaven and see that." He rose, crying louder: "Are there echoes here?" But his voice beat against the rocks undoubled.

She saw that a frenzy had seized him. He looked with eyes drained of human objects; standing square, with stiff half-dropped arms, and an intense melody of wretchedness in his voice.

"Rinaldo, Rinaldo!" he shouted: "Clelia!—no answer from man or ghost. She is dead. We two said to her—die! and she died. Therefore she is silent, for the dead have not a word. Oh! Milan, Milan! accursed betraying city! I should have found my work in you if you had kept faith. Now, here am I, talking to the strangled throat of this place, and can get no answer. Where am I? The world is hollow:—the miserable shell! They lied. Battle and slaughter they promised me, and enemies like ripe maize for the reaping-hook. I would have had them in thick to my hands. I would have washed my hands at night, and ate and drank and slept, and sung again to work in the morning. They promised me a sword and a sea to plunge it in, and our mother Italy to bless me. I would have toiled: I would have done good in my life. I would have bathed my

soul in our colours. I would have had our flag about my body for a winding-sheet, and the fighting angels of God to unroll me. Now, here am I, and my own pale mother trying at every turn to get in front of me. Have her away! It's a ghost, I know. She will be touching the strength out of me. She is not the mother I love and I serve. Go; cherish your daughter, you dead woman!"

Angelo reeled. "A spot of blood has sent me mad," he said, and caught for a darkness to cross his sight, and fell and lay flat.

Vittoria looked around her; her courage was needed in that long silence.

She adopted his language: "Our mother Italy is waiting for us. We must travel on, and not be weary. Angelo, my friend, lend me your help over these stones."

He rose quietly. She laid her elbow on his hand; thus supported she left a place that seemed to shudder. All the heavy day they walked almost silently; she not daring to probe his anguish with a question; and he calm and vacant as the hour following thunder. But, of her safety by his side she had no longer a doubt. She let him gather weeds and grasses, and bind them across her feet, and perform friendly services, sure that nothing earthly could

cause such a mental tempest to recur. The considerate observation, which at all seasons belongs to true courage, told her that it was not madness afflicting Angelo.

Towards nightfall they came upon a forester's hut, where they were welcomed by an old man and a little girl, who gave them milk and black bread, and straw to rest on. Angelo slept in the outer air. When Vittoria awoke she had the fancy that she had taken one long dive downward in a well, and on touching the bottom found her head above the surface. While her surprise was wearing off, she beheld the woodman's little girl at her feet holding up one end of her cloak, and peeping underneath, overcome by amazement at the flashing richness of the dress of the heroine Camilla. Entering into the state of her mind spontaneously, Vittoria sought to induce the child to kiss her; but quite vainly. The child's reverence for the dress allowed her only to be within reach of the hem of it, so as to delight her curiosity. Vittoria smiled when, as she sat up, the child fell back against the wall; and as she rose to her feet, the child scampered from the room. "My poor Camilla! you can charm somebody, yet," she said, limping; her visage like a broken water with the pain of her feet. "If the bell rings for Camilla, now what sort

of an entry will she make?" Vittoria treated her physical weakness and ailments with this spirit of humour. "They may say that Michiella has bewitched you, my Camilla. I think your voice would sound as if it were dragging its feet after it—just as a stork flies. O my Camilla! don't I wish I could do the same, and be ungraceful and at ease! A moan is married to every note of your treble, my Camilla, like December and May. Keep me from shrieking!"

The pangs shooting from her feet were scarce bearable, but the repression of them helped her to meet Angelo with a freer mind than, after the interval of separation, she would have had. The old woodman was cooking a queer composition of flour and milk springled with salt for them. Angelo cut a stout cloth to encase each of her feet, and bound them in it. He was more cheerful than she had ever seen him, and now first spoke of their destination. His design was to conduct her near to Bormio, there to engage a couple of men in her service who would accompany her to Meran, by the Val di Sole, while he crossed the Stelvio alone, and turning leftwards in the Tyrolese valley, tried the passage into Switzerland. Bormio, if, when they quitted the forest, a conveyance could be obtained, was no more than a short day's distance, according to the old woodman's

directions. Vittoria induced the little girl to sit upon her knee, and sang to her, but greatly unspirited the charm of her dress. The sun was rising as they bade adieu to the hut.

About mid-day they quitted the shelter of forest trees and stood on broken ground, without a path to guide them. Vittoria did her best to laugh at her mishaps in walking, and compared herself to a Capuchin pilgrim; but she was unused to going bareheaded and shoeless, and though she held on bravely, the strong beams of the sun and the stony ways warped her strength. She had to check fancies drawn from Arabian tales, concerning the help sometimes given by genii of the air and enchanted birds, that were so incessant and vivid that she found herself sulking at the loneliness and helplessness of the visible sky, and feared that her brain was losing its hold of things. Angelo led her to a half-shaded hollow, where they finished the remainder of yesterday's meat and wine. She set her eyes upon a gold-green lizard by a stone and slept.

"The quantity of sleep I require is unmeasured," she said, a minute afterwards, according to her reckoning of time, and expected to see the lizard still by the stone. Angelo was near her; the sky was full of colours, and the earth of shadows.

“Another day gone!” she exclaimed in wonderment, thinking that the days of human creatures had grown to be as rapid and (save towards the one end) as meaningless as the gaspings of a fish on dry land. He told her that he had explored the country as far as he had dared to stray from her. He had seen no habitation along the heights. The vale was too distant for strangers to reach it before nightfall. “We can make a little way on,” said Vittoria, and the trouble of walking began again. He entreated her more than once to have no fear. “What can I fear?” she asked. His voice sank penitently: “You can rely on me fully when there is anything to do for you.”

“I am sure of that,” she replied, knowing his allusion to be to his frenzy of yesterday. In truth, no woman could have had a gentler companion.

On the topmost ridge of the heights, looking over an interminable gulf of darkness they saw the lights of the vale. “A bird might find his perch there, but I think there is no chance for us,” said Vittoria. “The moment we move forward to them the lights will fly back. It is their way of behaving.”

Angelo glanced round desperately. Farther on along the ridge his eye caught sight of a low smouldering fire. When he reached it he had a great

disappointment. A fire in the darkness gives hopes that men will be at hand. Here there was not any human society. The fire crouched on its ashes. It was on a little circular eminence of mossed rock; black sticks, and brushwood, and dry fern, and split logs, pitchy to the touch, lay about; in the centre of them the fire coiled sullenly among its ashes, with a long eye like a serpent's.

“Could you sleep here?” said Angelo.

“Anywhere!” Vittoria sighed with droll dolefulness.

“I can promise to keep you warm, signorina.”

“I will not ask for more till to-morrow, my friend.”

She laid herself down sideways, curling up her feet, with her cheek on the palm of her hand.

Angelo knelt and coaxed the fire, whose appetite, like that which is said to be ours, was fed by eating, for after the red jaws had taken half-a-dozen sticks, it sang out for more, and sent up flame leaping after flame and thick smoke. Vittoria watched the scene through a thin division of her eyelids; the fire, the black abyss of country, the stars, and the sentinel figure. She dozed on the edge of sleep, unable to yield herself to it wholly. She believed that she was dreaming when by-and-by many voices filled her

ears. The fire was sounding like an angry sea, and the voices were like the shore, more intelligible, but confused in shriller clamour. She was awakened by Angelo, who knelt on one knee and took her outlying hand; then she saw that men surrounded them, some of whom were hurling the lighted logs about, some trampling down the outer rim of flames. They looked devilish to a first awakening glance. He told her that the men were friendly; they were good Italians. This had been the beacon arranged for the night of the Fifteenth, when no run of signals was seen from Milan; and yesterday afternoon it had been in mockery partially consumed. "We have aroused the country, signorina, and brought these poor fellows out of their beds. They supposed that Milan must be up and at work. I have explained everything to them."

Vittoria had rather to receive their excuses than to proffer her own. They were mostly youths dressed like the better class of peasantry. They laughed at the incident, stating how glad they would have been to behold the heights all across the lakes ablaze and promising action for the morrow. One square-shouldered fellow raised her lightly from the ground. She felt herself to be a creature for whom circumstance was busily plotting, so that it was useless to exert

her mind in thought. The long procession sank down the darkness, leaving the low red fire to die out behind them.

Next morning she awoke in a warm bed, possessed by odd images of flames that stood up like crowing cocks, and cowered like hens above the brood. She was in the house of one of their new friends, and she could hear Angelo talking in the adjoining room. A conveyance was ready to take her on to Bormio. A woman came to her to tell her this, appearing to have a dull desire to get her gone. She was a draggled woman, with a face of slothful anguish, like one of the inner spectres of a guilty man. She said that her husband was willing to drive the lady to Bormio for a sum that was to be paid at once into his wife's hand; and little enough it was which poor persons could ever look for from your patriots and disturbers who seduced orderly men from their labour, and made widows and ruined households. This was a new Italian language to Vittoria, and when the woman went on giving instances of households ruined by a husband's vile infatuation about his country, she did not attempt to defend the reckless lord, but dressed quickly that she might leave the house as soon as she could. Her stock of money barely satisfied the woman's demand. The woman seized it, and secreted

it in her girdle. When they had passed into the sitting-room, her husband, who was sitting conversing with Angelo, stretched out his hand and knocked the girdle.

"That's our trick," he said. "I guessed so. Fund up, our little Maria of the dirty fingers'-ends! We accept no money from true patriots. Grub in other ground, my dear!"

The woman stretched her throat awry, and set up a howl like a dog; but her claws came out when he seized her.

"Would you disgrace me, old fowl?"

"Lorenzo, may you rot like a pumpkin!"

The connubial reciprocities were sharp until the money lay on the table, when the woman began whining so miserably that Vittoria's sensitive nerves danced on her face, and at her authoritative interposition, Lorenzo very reluctantly permitted his wife to take what he chose to reckon a fair portion of the money, and also of his contempt. She seemed to be licking the money up, she bent over it so greedily.

"Poor wretch!" he observed; "she was born on a hired bed."

Vittoria felt that the recollection of this woman would haunt her. It was inconceivable to her that a handsome young man like Lorenzo should ever have

wedded the unsweet creature, who was like a crawling image of decay; but he, as if to account for his taste, said that they had been of a common age once, when he married her; now she had grown old. He repeated that she "was born on a hired bed." They saw nothing further of her.

Vittoria's desire was to get to Meran speedily, that she might see her friends, and have tidings of her lover and the city. Those baffled beacon-flames on the heights had become an irritating indicative vision: she thirsted for the history. Lorenzo offered to conduct her over the Tonale Pass into the Val di Sole, or up the Val Furva, by the pass of the Corno dei Tre Signori, into the Val del Monte to Pejo, thence by Cles, or by Bolzano, to Meran. But she required shoeing and refitting; and for other reasons also, she determined to go on to Bormio. She supposed that Angelo had little money, and that in a place such as Bormio sounded to her ears she might possibly obtain the change for the great money-order which the triumph of her singing had won from Antonio-Pericles. In spite of Angelo's appeals to her to hurry on to the end of her journey without tempting chance by a single pause, she resolved to go to Bormio. Lorenzo privately assured her that there were bankers in Bormio. Many bankers, he

said, came there from Milan, and that fact she thought sufficient for her purpose. The wanderers parted regretfully. A little chapel, on a hillock off the road, shaded by chestnuts, was pointed out to Lorenzo where to bring a letter for Angelo. Vittoria begged Angelo to wait till he heard from her; and then, with mutual wavings of hands, she was driven out of his sight.

CHAPTER XXV.

ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS.

AFTER parting from Vittoria, Angelo made his way to an inn, where he ate and drank like a man of the fields, and slept with the power of one from noon till after morning. The innkeeper came up to his room, and, finding him awake, asked him if he was disposed to take a second holiday in bed. Angelo jumped up; as he did so, his stiletto slipped from under his pillow and flashed.

“That’s a pretty bit of steel,” said the innkeeper, but could not get a word out of him. It was plain to Angelo that this fellow had suspicions. Angelo had been careful to tie up his clothes in a bundle; there was nothing for the innkeeper to see, save a young man in bed, who had a terrible weapon near his hand, and a look in his eyes of wary indolence that counselled prudent dealings. He went out, and returned a second and a third time, talking more and

more confusedly and fretfully; but as he was again going to leave, "No, no," said Angelo, determined to give him a lesson, "I have taken a liking to your company. Here, come here; I will show you a trick. I learnt it from the Servians when I was three feet high. Look; I lie quite still, you observe. Try to get on the other side of that door and the point of this blade shall scratch you through it." Angelo laid the blue stilet up his wrist, and slightly curled his arm. "Try," he repeated, but the innkeeper had stopped short in his movement towards the door. "Well, then, stay where you are," said Angelo, "and look; I'll be as good as my word. There's the point I shall strike." With that he gave the peculiar Servian jerk of the muscles, from the wrist up to the arm, and the blade quivered on the mark. The innkeeper fell back in admiring horror. "Now fetch it to me," said Angelo, putting both arms carelessly under his head. The innkeeper tugged at the blade. "Illustrious signore, I am afraid of breaking it," he almost whimpered; "it seems alive, does it not?" "Like a hawk on a small bird," said Angelo; "that's the beauty of those blades. They kill, and put you to as little pain as a shot; and it's better than a shot in your breast—there's something to show for it. Send up your wife or your daughter to take orders about

my breakfast. It's the breakfast of five mountaineers; and don't 'Illustrious signore' me, sir, either in my hearing or out of it. Leave the knife sticking."

The innkeeper sidled out with a 'dumb salute. "I can count on his discretion for a couple of hours," Angelo said to himself. He knew the effect of an exhibition of physical dexterity and strength upon a coward. The landlord's daughter came and received his orders for breakfast. Angelo inquired whether they had been visited by Germans of late. The girl told him that a German chasseur with a couple of soldiers had called them up last night.

"Wouldn't it have been a pity if they had dragged me out and shot me?" said Angelo.

"But they were after a lady," she explained; "they have gone on to Bormio, and expect to catch her there or in the mountains."

"Better there than in the mountains, my dear; don't you think so?"

The girl said that she would not like to meet those fellows among the mountains.

"Suppose you were among the mountains, and those fellows came up with you; wouldn't you clap your hands to see me jumping down right in front of you all?" said Angelo.

"Yes, I should," she admitted. "What is one man though!"

"Something, if he feeds like five. Quick! I must eat. Have you a lover?"

"Yes."

"Fancy you are waiting on him."

"He's only a middling lover, signore. He lives at Cles, over Val Pejo, in Val di Non, a long way, and courts me twice a year, when he comes over to do carpentering. He cuts very pretty Madonnas. He is a German."

"Ha! you kneel to the Madonna, and give your lips to a German? Go."

"But I don't like him much, signore; it's my father who wishes me to have him; he can make money."

Angelo motioned to her to be gone, saying to himself, "That father of hers would betray the saints for a handful of florins."

He dressed, and wrenched his knife from the door. Hearing the clatter of a horse at the porch, he stopped as he was descending the stairs. A German voice said, "Sure enough, my jolly landlord, she's there, in Worms—your Bormio. Found her at the big hotel: spoke not a syllable; stole away, stole away. One chopin of wine! I'm off on four legs to

the captain. Those lads who are after her by Roveredo and Trent have bad noses. 'Poor nose—empty belly.' Says the captain, 'I stick at the point of the cross-roads.' Says I, 'Herr Captain, I'm back to you first of the lot.' My business is to find the runaway lady—pretty Fräulein! pretty Fräulein! *lai-ai!* There's money on her servant, too; he's a disguised Excellency—a handsome boy; but he has cut himself loose, and he go hang. Two birds for the pride of the thing; one for satisfaction—I'm satisfied. I've killed chamois in my time. Jacob, I am; Baumwalder, I am; Feckelwitz, likewise; and the very devil for following a track. Ach! the wine is good. You know the song?—

'He who drinks wine, he may cry with a will,
Fortune is mine, may she stick to me still.'

I give it you in German—the language of song! my own, my native! *lai-ai—lai-ai—la-la-lai-ai-ä-ä!*

'While stars still sit
On mountain tops,
I take my gun,
Kiss little one
On mother's breast.
Äi-üu-ē!

'My pipe is lit,
I climb the slopes,
I meet the dawn—
A little one
On mother's breast.
Äi-äiē: ta-ta-tai: üu-üu-üu-ē!

Another chopin, my jolly landlord. What's that you're mumbling? About the servant of my runaway young lady? He go hang! What?——"

Angelo struck his foot heavily on the stairs; the innkeeper coughed and ran back, bowing to his guest. The chasseur cried, "I'll drink farther on—wine between gaps!" A coin chinked on the steps in accompaniment to the chasseur's departing gallop. "Beast of a Tedesco," the landlord exclaimed as he picked up the money; "*they* do the reckoning—not we. If I had served him with the worth of this, I should have had the bottle at my head. What a country ours is! We're ridden over, ridden over!" Angelo compelled the landlord to sit with him while he ate like five mountaineers. He left mere bones on the table. "It's wonderful," said the innkeeper; "you can't know what fear is." "I think I don't," Angelo replied; "you do; cowards have to serve every party in turn. Up, and follow at my heels till I dismiss you. You know the pass into the Val Pejo and the Val di Sole." The innkeeper stood entrenched behind a sturdy negative. Angelo eased him to submission by telling him that he only wanted the way to be pointed out. "Bring tobacco; you're going to have an idle day," said Angelo; "I pay you when we separate." He was deaf to entreaties and refusals,

and began to look mad about the eyes ; his poor coward plied him with expostulations, offered his wife, his daughter, half the village, for the service : he had to follow, but would take no cigars. Angelo made his daughter fetch bread and cigars, and put a handful in his pocket, upon which, after two hours of inactivity at the foot of the little chapel, where Angelo waited for the coming of Vittoria's messenger, the innkeeper was glad to close his fist. About noon Lorenzo came, and at once acted a play of eyes for Angelo to perceive his distrust of the man and a multitude of bad things about him : he was reluctant, notwithstanding Angelo's ready nod, to bring out a letter ; and frowned again, for emphasis to the expressive comedy. The letter said :—

“I have fallen upon English friends. They lend me money. Fly to Lugano by the help of these notes : I inclose them, and will not ask pardon for it. The Valtellina is dangerous ; the Stelvio we know to be watched. Retrace your way, and then try the Engadine. I should stop on a breaking bridge if I thought my companion, my Carlo's cousin, was near capture. I am well taken care of : one of my dearest friends, a captain in the English army, bears me company across. I have a maid from one of the vil-

lages, a willing girl. We ride up to the mountains; to-morrow we cross the pass; there is a glacier. Val di Non sounds Italian, but I am going into the enemy's land. You see I am well guarded. My immediate anxiety concerns you; for what will our Carlo ask of me? Lose not one moment. Away, and do not detain Lorenzo. He has orders to meet us up high in the mountain this evening. He is the best of servants; but I always meet the best everywhere—that is, in Italy. Leaving it, I grieve. No news from Milan, except of great confusion there. I judge by the quiet of my sleep that we have come to no harm there.

“Your faithfullest

“VITTORIA.”

Lorenzo and the innkeeper had arrived at an altercation before Angelo finished reading. Angelo checked it, and told Lorenzo to make speed: he sent no message.

“My humanity,” Angelo then addressed his craven associate, “counsels me that it's better to drag you some distance on than to kill you. You're a man of intelligence, and you know why I have to consider the matter. I give you guide's pay up to the glacier, and ten florins *buon'mano*. Would you rather earn it with the blood of a countryman? I can't let that

tongue of yours be on the high road of running Tedeschi: you know it."

"Illustrious signore, obedience oils necessity," quoth the innkeeper. "If we had but a few more of my cigars!"

"Step on," said Angelo, sternly.

They walked till dark and they were in keen air. A hut full of recent grass-cuttings, on the border of a sloping wood, sheltered them. The innkeeper moaned for food at night and in the morning, and Angelo tossed him pieces of bread. Beyond the wood they came upon bare crag and commenced a sterner ascent, reached the height, and roused an eagle. The great bird went up with a sharp yelp, hanging over them with knotted claws. Its shadow stretched across sweeps of fresh snow. The innkeeper sent a mocking yelp after the eagle.

"Up here, one forgets one is a father—what's more, a husband," he said, striking a finger on the side of his nose.

"And a cur, a traitor, carrion," said Angelo.

"Ah, signore, one might know you were a noble. You can't understand our troubles, who carry a house on our heads, and have to fill mouths agape."

"Speak when you have better to say," Angelo replied.

“Padrone, one would really like to have your good opinion; and I’m lean as a wolf for a morsel of flesh. I could part with my buon’mano for a sight of red meat—oh! red meat dripping.”

“If,” cried Angelo, bringing his eyebrows down black on the man,—“if I knew that you had ever in your life betrayed one of us—look below; there you should lie to be pecked and gnawed at.”

“Ah, Jacopo Cruchi, what an end for you when you are full of good meanings!” the innkeeper moaned. “I see your ribs, my poor soul!”

Angelo quitted his side. The tremendous excitement of the Alpine solitudes was like a stringent wine to his surcharged spirit. He was one to whom life and death had become as the yes and no of ordinary men: not more than a turning to the right or to the left. It surprised him that this fellow, knowing his own cowardice and his conscience, should consent to live, and care to eat to live.

When he returned to his companion, he found the fellow drinking from the flask of an Austrian soldier. Another whitecoat was lying near. They pressed Angelo to drink, and began to play lubberly pranks. One clapped hands, while the other rammed the flask at the reluctant mouth, till Angelo tripped him

and made him a subject for derision ; whereupon they were all good friends. Musket on shoulder, the soldiers descended, blowing at their finger-nails and puffing at their tobacco—*lauter kaiserlicher* (utter Imperial) as with a sad enforcement of resignation they had, while lighting, characterised the universally detested government issue of the leaf.

“They are after *her*,” said Jacopo, and he shot out his thumb and twisted an eyelid. His looks became insolent, and he added: “I let them go on ; but now, for my part, I must tell you, my worthy gentleman, I’ve had enough of it. You go your way, I go mine. Pay me, and we part. With the utmost reverence, I quit you. Climbing mountains at my time of life is out of all reason. If you want companions, I’ll signal to that pair of Tedeschi ; they’re within hail. Would you like it ? Say the word, if you would—hey !”

Angelo smiled at the visible effect of the liquor.

“Barto Rizzo would be the man to take you in hand,” he remarked.

The innkeeper flung his head back to ejaculate, and murmured, “Barto Rizzo ! defend me from him ! Why, he levies contribution upon us in the Valtellina for the good of Milan ; and if we don’t pay, we’re

all of us down in a black book. Disobey, and it's worse than swearing you won't pay taxes to the legitimate—perdition to it!—government. Do you know Barto Rizzo, padrone? You don't know him, I hope? I'm sure you wouldn't know such a fellow."

"I am his favourite pupil," said Angelo.

"I'd have sworn it," groaned the innkeeper, and cursed the day and hour when Angelo crossed his threshold. That done, he begged permission to be allowed to return, crying with tears of entreaty for mercy: "Barto Rizzo's pupils are always out upon bloody businesses!" Angelo told him that he had now an opportunity of earning the approval of Barto Rizzo, and then said, "On," and they went in the track of the two whitecoats; the innkeeper murmuring all the while that he wanted the approval of Barto Rizzo as little as his enmity; he wanted neither frost nor fire. The glacier being traversed, they skirted a young stream, and arrived at an inn, where they found the soldiers regaling. Jacopo was informed by them that the lady whom they were pursuing had not passed. They pushed their wine for Angelo to drink: he declined, saying that he had sworn not to drink before he had shot the chamois with the white cross on his back.

"Come: we're two to one," they said, "and drink you shall this time!"

"Two to two," returned Angelo: "here is my Jacopo, and if he doesn't count for one, I won't call him father-in-law, and the fellow living at Cles may have his daughter without fighting for her."

"Right so," said one of the soldiers, "and you don't speak bad German already."

"Haven't I served in the ranks?" said Angelo, giving a bugle-call of the reveillée.

He got on with them so well that they related the object of their expedition, which was, to catch a runaway young rebel lady and hold her fast down at Cles for the great captain—*unser tüchtiger Hauptmann*.

"Hadn't she a servant, a sort of rascal?" Angelo inquired.

"Right so; she had: but the doe's the buck in this chase."

Angelo tossed them cigars. The valley was like a tumbled mountain, thick with crags and eminences, through which the river worked strenuously, sinuous in foam, hurrying at the turns. Angelo watched all the ways from a distant height till set of sun. He saw another couple of soldiers meet those two at the inn, and then one pair went up towards the vale-head.

It seemed as if Vittoria had disconcerted them by having chosen another route.

“Padrone,” said Jacopo to him abruptly, when they descended to find a resting-place, “you are, I speak humbly, so like the devil that I must enter into a stipulation with you, before I continue in your company, and take the worst at once. This is going to be the second night of my sleeping away from my wife: I merely mention it. I pinch her, and she beats me, and we are equal. But if you think of making me fight, I tell you I won’t. If there was a furnace behind me, I should fall into it rather than run against a bayonet. I’ve heard say that the nerves are in the front part of us, and that’s where I feel the shock.” Now we’re on a plain footing. Say that I’m not to fight. I’ll be your servant till you release me, but say I’m not to fight; padrone, say that.”

“I can’t say that: I’ll say I won’t make you fight,” Angelo pacified him by replying. From this moment Jacopo followed him less like a graceless dog pulled by his chain. In fact, with the sense of prospective security, he tasted a luxurious amazement in being moved about by a superior will, wafted from his inn, and paid for witnessing strange incidents. Angelo took care that he was fed well at

the place where they slept, but himself ate nothing. Early after dawn they mounted the heights above the road. It was about noon that Angelo discerned a party coming from the pass on foot, consisting of two women and three men. They rested an hour at the village where he had slept overnight; the muskets were a quarter of a mile to the rear of them. When they started afresh, one of the muskets was discharged, and while the echoes were rolling away, a reply to it sounded in the front. Angelo, from his post of observation, could see that Vittoria and her party were marching between two guards, and that she herself must have perceived both the front and rearward couple. Yet she and her party held on their course at an even pace. For a time he kept them clearly in view; but it was tough work along the slopes of crag: presently Jacopo slipped and went down. "Ah, padrone," he said: "I'm done for; leave me."

"Not though I should have to haul you on my back," replied Angelo. "If I do leave you, I must cut out your tongue."

"Rather than that, I'd go on a sprained ankle," said Jacopo, and he strove manfully to conquer pain; limping and exclaiming, "Oh, my little village! Oh, my little inn! When can a man say that he

has finished running about the world! The moment he sits, in comes the devil."

Angelo was obliged to lead him down to the open way, upon which they made slow progress.

"The noble gentlemen might let me return—he might trust me now," Jacopo whimpered.

"The devil trusts nobody," said Angelo.

"Ah, padrone! there's a crucifix. Let me kneel by that."

Angelo indulged him. Jacopo knelt by the wayside and prayed for an easy ankle and a snoring pillow and no wakeners. After this he was refreshed. The sun sank; the darkness spread around; the air grew icy. "Does the Blessed Virgin ever consider what patriots have to endure?" Jacopo muttered to himself, and aroused a rare laugh from Angelo, who seized him under the arm, half-lifting him on. At the inn where they rested, he bathed and bandaged the foot.

"I can't help feeling a kindness to you for it," said Jacopo.

"I can't afford to leave you behind," Angelo accounted for his attention.

"Padrone, we've been understanding one another all along by our thumbs. It's that old inn of mine—the taxes! we have to sell our souls to pay the taxes. There's the tongue of the thing. I wouldn't betray you; I wouldn't."

"I'll try you," said Angelo, and put him to proof next day, when the soldiers stopped them as they were driving in a cart, and Jacopo swore to them that Angelo was his intended son-in-law.

There was evidently an unusual activity among the gendarmerie of the lower valley, the Val di Non; for Jacopo had to repeat his fable more than once, and Angelo thought it prudent not to make inquiries about travellers. In this valley they were again in summer heat. Summer splendours robed the broken ground. The Val di Non lies towards the sun, banked by the Val di Sole, like the southern lizard under a stone. Chestnut forest and shoulder over shoulder of vineyard and meadows of marvellous emerald, with here and there central, partly-wooded crags, peaked with castle-ruins, and ancestral castles that are still warm homes, and villages dropped among them, and a river bounding and rushing eagerly through the rich enclosure, form the scene, beneath that Italian sun which turns everything to gold. There is a fair breadth to the vale: it enjoys a great oval of sky; the falls of shade are dispersed, dot the hollow range, and are not at noontide a broad curtain passing over from right to left. The sun reigns and also governs in the Val di Non.

“The grape has his full benefit here, padrone,” said Jacopo.

But the place was too populous, and too much subjected to the general eye, to please Angelo. At Cles they were compelled to bear an inspection, and a little comedy occurred. Jacopo, after exhibiting Angelo as his son-in-law, seeing doubts on the soldiers’ faces, mentioned the name of the German suitor for his daughter’s hand—the carpenter, Johann Spellmann, to whose workshop he requested to be taken. Johann, being one of the odd Germans in the valley, was well known: he was carving wood astride a stool, and stopped his whistling to listen to the soldiers, who took the first word out of Jacopo’s mouth, and were convinced, by Johann’s droop of the chin, that the tale had some truth in it; and more when Johann yelled at the Valteline innkeeper to know why, then, he had come to him, if he was prepared to play him false. One of the soldiers said bluntly that, as Angelo’s appearance answered to the portrait of a man for whom they were on the lookout, they would, if their countryman liked, take him and give him a dose of marching and imprisonment.

“Ach! that won’t make my little Rosetta love me better,” cried Johann, who commenced taking up a

string of reproaches against women, and pitched his carving-blade and tools abroad in the wood-dust.

"Well, now, it's queer you don't want to fight this lad," said Jacopo; "he's come to square it with you that way, if you think best."

Johann spared a remark between his vehement imprecations against the sex to say that he was ready to fight; but his idea of vengeance was directed upon the abstract conception of a faithless womankind. Angelo, by reason of his detestation of Germans, temporarily threw himself into the part he was playing to the extent of despising him. Johann admitted to Jacopo that intervals of six months' duration in a courtship were wide jumps for Love to take.

"Yes; amor! amor!" he exclaimed with extreme dejection; "*I* could wait. Well! since you've brought the young man, we'll have it out."

He stepped before Angelo with bare fists. Jacopo had to interpose. The soldiers backed Johann, who now said to Angelo, "Since you've come for it, we'll have it out."

Jacopo had great difficulty in bringing him to see that it was a matter to talk over. Johann swore he would not talk about it, and was ready to fight a dozen Italians, man up man down.

“Bare-fisted?” screamed Jacopo.

“Hey! the old way! Give him knuckles, and break his back, my boy!” cried the soldiers; “none of their steel *this* side of the mountain.”

Johann waited for Angelo to lift his hands; and to instigate his reluctant adversary, thumped his chest; but Angelo did not move. The soldiers roared.

“If she has you, she shall have a dolly,” said Johann, now heated with the prospect of presenting that sort of husband to his little Rosetta. At this juncture Jacopo threw himself between them.

“It shall be a real fight,” he said; “my daughter can’t make up her mind, and she shall have the best man. Leave me to arrange it all fairly; and you come here in a couple of hours, my children,” he addressed the soldiers, who unwillingly quitted the scene where there was a certainty of fun, on the assurance of there being a livelier scene to come.

When they had turned their heels on the shop, Jacopo made a face at Johann; Johann swung round upon Angelo, and met a smile. Then followed explanations.

“What’s that you say? She’s true—she’s true?” exclaimed the astounded lover.

“True enough, but a girl at an inn wants hotter courting,” said Jacopo. “His Excellency here is after his own sweetheart.”

Johann huzzaed, hugged at Angelo’s hands, and gave a lusty filial tap to Jacopo on the shoulder. Bread and grapes and Tyrolese wine were placed for them, and Johann’s mother soon produced a salad, eggs, and fowl; and then and there declared her willingness to receive Rosetta into the household, “if she would swear at the outset never to have *heimweh* (home-longing); as people—men and women, both—always did when they took to a new home across a mountain.”

“She won’t—will she?” Johann inquired with a dubious sparkle.

“Not she,” said Jacopo.

After the meal he drew Johann aside. They returned to Angelo, and Johann beckoned him to leave the house by a back way, leading up a slope of garden into high vine-poles. He said that he had seen a party pass out of Cles from the inn early, in a light car, on towards Meran. The gendarmerie were busy on the road: a mounted officer had dashed up to the inn an hour later, and had followed them: it was the talk of the village.

“Padrone, you dismiss me now,” said Jacopo.

“I pay you, but don’t dismiss you,” said Angelo, and handed him a bank-note.

“I stick to you, padrone, till you do dismiss me,” Jacopo sighed.

Johann offered to conduct them as far as the Monte Pallade pass, and they started, avoiding the high road, which was enviably broad and solid. Within view of a village under climbing woods, they discerned an open car, flanked by bayonets, returning towards Cles. Angelo rushed ahead of them down the declivity, and stood full in the road to meet the procession. A girl sat in the car, who hung her head, weeping; Lorenzo was beside her; an Englishman on foot gave employment to a pair of soldiers to get him along. As they came near at marching pace, Lorenzo yawned and raised his hand to his cheek, keeping the thumb pointed behind him. Including the girl, there were four prisoners: Vittoria was absent. The Englishman, as he was being propelled forward, addressed Angelo in French, asking him whether he could bear to see an unoffending foreigner treated with wanton violation of law. The soldiers bellowed at their captive, and Angelo sent a stupid shrug after him. They rounded a bend of the road. Angelo tightened the buckle at his waist.

“Now I trust you,” he said to Jacopo. “Follow the length of five miles over the pass: if you don’t see me then, you have your liberty, tongue and all.”

With that he doubled his arms and set forth at a steady run, leaving his companions to speculate on his powers of endurance. They did so complacently enough, until Jacopo backed him for a distance and Johann betted against him, when behold them at intervals taking a sharp trot to keep him in view.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DUEL IN THE PASS.

MEANWHILE Captain Weisspriess had not been idle. Standing at a blunt angle of the ways converging upon Vittoria's presumable destination, he had roused up the gendarmerie along the routes to Meran by Trent on one side, and Bormio upon the other; and himself soon came to the conclusion that she had rejected the valley of the Adige for the Valteline, whence he supposed that she would be tempted either to cross the Stelvio or one of the passes into southernmost Tyrol. He was led to think that she would certainly bear upon Switzerland, by a course of reasoning connected with Angelo Guidascarpi, who, fleeing under the cross of blood, might be calculated on to push for the mountains of the Republic; and he might—judging by the hazards—conduct the lady thither, to enjoy the fruits of crime and love in security. The captain, when he had discovered

Angelo's crest and name on the betraying handkerchief, had no doubts concerning the nature of their intimacy, and he was spurred by a new and thrice eager desire to capture the couple—the criminal for the purposes of justice, and the other because he had pledged his notable reputation in the chase of her. The conscience of this man's vanity was extremely active. He had engaged to conquer the stubborn girl, and he thought it possible that he might take a mistress from the patriot ranks, with a loud ha! ha! at revolutionists, and some triumph over his comrades. And besides he was the favourite of Countess Anna of Lenkenstein, who yet refused to bring her estates to him; she dared to trifle; she also was a woman who required rude lessons. Weisspriess, a poor soldier bearing the heritage of lusty appetites, had an eye on his fortune, and served neither Mars alone nor Venus. Countess Anna was to be among that company assembled at the Castle of Sonnenberg in Meran; and if, while introducing Vittoria there with a discreet and exciting reserve, he at the same time handed over the assassin of Count Paul, a fine harvest of praise and various pleasant forms of female passion were to be looked for—a rich vista of a month's intrigue; at the end of it possibly his wealthy lady, thoroughly tamed, for a wife, and re-

doubled triumph over his comrades. Without these successes, what availed the fame of the keenest swordsman in the Austrian army?—The feast as well as the plumes of vanity were offered to reward the able exercise of his wits.

He remained at the sub-Alpine inn until his servant Wilhelm (for whom he had despatched the duchess's chasseur, then in attendance on Vittoria) arrived from Milan, bringing his uniform. The chasseur was directed on the Bormio line, with orders that he should cause the arrest of Vittoria only in the case of her being on the extreme limit of the Swiss frontier. Keeping his communications alert, Weisspriess bore towards that way to meet him. Fortune smiled on his strategy. Jacob Baumwalder Feckelwitz—full of wine, and discharging hurrahs along the road—met him on the bridge over the roaring Oglio, just out of Edolo, and gave him news of the fugitives. “Both of them were at the big hotel in Bormio,” said Jacob; “and I set up a report that the Stelvio was watched; and so it is.” He added that he thought they were going to separate; he had heard something to that effect; he believed that the young lady was bent upon crossing one of the passes to Meran. Last night it had devolved on him to kiss away the tears of the young lady's maid, a Valteline peasant-girl,

who deplored the idea of an expedition over the mountains, and had, with the usual cat-like tendencies of these Italian minxes, torn his cheek in return for his assiduities. Jacob displayed the pretty scratch obtained in the Herr Captain's service, and got his money for having sighted Vittoria and seen double. Weisspriess decided in his mind that Angelo had now separated from her (or rather, she from him) for safety. He thought it very probable that she would likewise fly to Switzerland. Yet, knowing that there was the attraction of many friends for her at Meran, he conceived that he should act more prudently by throwing himself on that line, and forwarding Jacob Baumwalder along the Valteline by Val Viola, up to Ponte in the Engadine, with orders to seize her if he could see her and have her conveyed to Cles, in Tyrol. Vittoria being only by the gentlest interpretation of her conduct not under interdict, an unscrupulous Imperial officer might in those military times venture to employ the gendarmerie for his own purposes, if he could but give a plausible colour of devotion to the Imperial interests.

The chasseur sped lamentingly back, and Weisspriess, taking a guide from the skirting hamlet above Edolo, quitted the Val Camonica, climbed the

Tonale, and reached Vermiglio in the branch valley of that name, scientifically observing the features of the country as he went. At Vermiglio he encountered a brother officer of one of his former regiments, a fat major on a tour of inspection, who happened to be a week behind news of the army, and detained him on the pretext of helping him on in his car—a mockery that drove Weispriess to the perpetual reply, “You are my superior officer,” which reduced the major to ask him whether he had been degraded a step. As usual, Weisspriess was pushed to assert his haughtiness, backed by the shadow of his sword. “I am a man with a family,” said the major, modestly. “Then I shall call you my superior officer while they allow you to remain so,” returned Weisspriess, who scorned a married soldier.

“I aspired to the Staff once myself,” said the major. “Unfortunately, I grew in girth—the wrong way for ambition. I digest, I assimilate with a fatal ease. Stout men are doomed to the obscurer paths. You may quote Napoleon as a contrary instance—eh? I maintain positively that his day was over, his sun was eclipsed, when his valet had to loosen the buckles of his waistcoat and breech. Now, what do you say?”

“I say,” Weisspriess replied, “that if there’s a

further depreciation of the paper currency, we shall none of us have much chance of digesting or assimilating either—if I know at all what those processes mean.”

“Our good Lombard cow is not half squeezed enough,” observed the major, confidentially in tone. “When she makes a noise—quick! the pail at her udders and work away; that’s my advice. What’s the verse?—our Zwitterwitz’s, I mean; the Viennese poet:—

‘Her milk is good—the Lombard cow;
Let her be noisy when she pleases:
But if she kicks the pail, I vow,
We’ll make her used to sharper squeezes:
We’ll write her mighty deeds in CHEESES:
(That is, if she yields milk enow).’ ”

“Capital! capital!” the major applauded his quotation, and went on to speak of ‘that Zwitterwitz’ as having served in a border regiment, after creating certain court scandal, and of his carrying off a Wallach lady from her lord and selling her to a Turk, and turning Turk himself and keeping a harem. Five years afterwards he reappeared in Vienna with a volume of what he called ‘Black Eagle Poems,’ and regained possession of his barony. “So far, so good,” said the major; “but when he applied for his old commission in the army—that was rather too cool.”

Weisspriess muttered intelligibly, "I've heard the remark, that you can't listen to a man five minutes without getting something out of him."

"I don't know; it may be," said the major, imagining that Weisspriess demanded some stronger flavours of gossip in his talk. "There's no stir in these valleys. They arrested, somewhere close on Trent yesterday afternoon, a fellow calling himself Beppo, the servant of an Italian woman—a dancer, I fancy. They're on the look-out for her too, I'm told; though what sort of capers she can be cutting in Tyrol, I can't even guess."

The major's car was journeying leisurely towards Cles. "Whip that brute!" Weisspriess sung out to the driver, and begging the major's pardon, requested to know whither he was bound. The major informed him that he hoped to sup in Trent. "Good heaven! not at this pace," Weisspriess shouted. But the pace was barely accelerated, and he concealed his reasons for invoking speed. They were late in arriving at Trent, where Weisspriess cast eye on the imprisoned wretch, who declared piteously that he was the trusted and innocent servant of the signorina Vittoria, and had been visiting all the castles of Meran in search of her. The captain's man Wilhelm had been the one to pounce on poor Beppo while the

latter was wandering disconsolately. Leaving him to howl, Weisspriess procured the loan of a horse from a colonel of cavalry at the Buon Consiglio barracks, and mounted an hour before dawn, followed by Wilhelm. He reached Cles in time to learn that Vittoria and her party had passed through it a little in advance of him. Breakfasting there, he enjoyed the first truly calm cigar of many days. Gendarmes whom he had met near the place came in at his heels. They said that the party would positively be arrested, or not allowed to cross the Monte Pallade. The passes to Meran and Botzen, and the road to Trent, were strictly guarded. Weisspriess hurried them forward with particular orders that they should take into custody the whole of the party, excepting the lady; her, if arrested with the others, they were to release: her maid and the three men were to be marched back to Cles, and there kept fast.

The game was now his own: he surveyed its pretty intricate moves as on a map. The character of Herr Johannes he entirely discarded: an Imperial officer in his uniform, sword in belt, could scarcely continue that meek performance. "But I may admire music, and entreat her to give me a particular note, if she has it," said the captain, hanging in contemplation over a coming scene like a quivering hawk about to

close its wings. His heart beat thick; which astonished him: hitherto it had never made that sort of movement.

From Cles he despatched a letter to the fair châtelaine at Meran, telling her that by dainty and skilful management of the paces, he was bringing on the intractable heroine of the Fifteenth, and was to be expected in about two or three days. The letter was entrusted to Wilhelm, who took the borrowed horse back to Trent.

Weisspriess was on the muletrack a mile above the last village ascending to the pass, when he observed the party of prisoners, and climbed up into covert. As they went by he discerned but one person in female garments; the necessity to crouch for obscurity prevented him from examining them separately. He counted three men and beheld one of them between gendarmes. "That must be my villain," he said.

It was clear that Vittoria had chosen to go forward alone. The captain praised her spirit, and now pushed ahead with hunter's strides. He passed an inn, closed and tenantless: behind him lay the Val di Non; in front the darker valley of the Adige: where was the prey? A storm of rage set in upon him with the fear that he had been befooled. He lit a cigar,

to assume ease of aspect, whatever the circumstances might be, and gain some inward serenity by the outer reflection of it—not altogether without success. “My lady must be a doughty walker,” he thought; “at this rate she will be in the Ultenthal before sunset.” A wooded height ranged on his left as he descended rapidly. Coming to a roll of grass sown with grey rock, he climbed it, and mounting one of the boulders, beheld at a distance of half-a-dozen stone-throws downward, the figure of a woman holding her hand cup-shape to a wayside fall of water. The path by which she was going rounded the height he stood on. He sprang over the rocks, catching up his clattering steel scabbard; and plunging through tinted leafage and green underwood, steadied his heels on a sloping bank, and came down on the path with stones and earth and brambles, in time to appear as a seated pedestrian when Vittoria turned the bend of the mountain way.

Gracefully withdrawing the cigar from his mouth, and touching his breast with turned-in fingers, he accosted her with a comical operatic effort at her high notes: “Italia!”

She gathered her arms on her bosom and looked swiftly round: then at the apparition of her enemy.

It is but an ironical form of respect that you offer

to the prey you have been hotly chasing and have caught. Weisspriess conceived that he had good reasons for addressing her in the tone best suited to his character: he spoke with a ridiculous mincing suavity:

“My pretty sweet! are you not tired? We have not seen one another for days! Can you have forgotten the enthusiastic Herr Johannes? You have been in pleasant company, no doubt; but I have been all—all alone. Think of that! What an exceedingly fortunate chance this is! I was smoking dolefully, and imagining anything but such a rapture.—No, no, mademoiselle, be mannerly.” The captain blocked her passage. “You must not leave me while I am speaking. A good governess would have taught you that in the nursery. I am afraid you had an inattentive governess, who did not impress upon you the duty of recognising friends when you meet them. Ha! you were educated in England, I have heard. Shake hands. It is our custom—I think a better one—to kiss on the right cheek and the left, but we will shake hands.”

“In God’s name, sir, let me go on,” Vittoria could just gather voice to utter.

“But,” cried the delighted captain, “you address me in the tones of a basso profundo! It is absurd.

Do you suppose that I am to be deceived by your artifice?—rogue that you are! Don't I know you are a woman? a sweet, an ecstatic, a darling little woman!"

He laughed. She shivered to hear the solitary echoes. There was sunlight on the farthest Adige walls, but damp shade already filled the east-facing hollows.

"I beg you very earnestly to let me go on," said Vittoria.

"With equal earnestness, I beg you to let me accompany you," he replied. "I mean no offence, mademoiselle; but I have sworn that I and no one but I shall conduct you to the Castle of Sonnenberg, where you will meet the Lenkenstein ladies, with whom I have the honour to be acquainted. You see, you have nothing to fear if you play no foolish pranks, like a kicking filly in the pasture."

"If it is your pleasure," she said gravely; but he obtruded the bow of an arm. She drew back. Her first blank despair at sight of the trap she had fallen into, was clearing before her natural high courage.

"My little lady! my precious prima donna! do you refuse the most trifling aid from me? It's because I'm a German."

"There are many noble gentlemen who are Germans," said Vittoria.

"It's because I'm a German; I know it is. But, don't you see, Germany invades Italy, and keeps hold of her? Providence decrees it so—ask the priests! You are a delicious Italian damsel, and you will take the arm of a German."

Vittoria raised her face. "Do you mean that I am your prisoner?"

"You did not look braver at La Scala;" the captain bowed to her.

"Ah, I forgot," said she; "you saw me there. If, signore, you will do me the favour to conduct me to the nearest inn, I will sing to you."

"It is precisely my desire, signorina. You are not married to that man Guidascarpi, I presume? No, no: you are merely his . . . friend. May I have the felicity of hearing you call *me* your friend? Why, you tremble! are you afraid of me?"

"To tell the truth, you talk too much to please me," said Vittoria.

The captain praised her frankness, and he liked it. The trembling of her frame still fascinated his eyes, but her courage and the absence of all womanly play and cowering about her manner impressed him seriously. He stood looking at her, biting his moustache, and trying to provoke her to smile.

"Conduct you to the nearest inn; yes," he said, as

if musing. "To the nearest inn, where you will sing to me ; sing to me. It is not an objectionable scheme. The inns will not be choice : but the society will be exquisite. Say first, I am your sworn cavalier ?"

"It does not become me to say that," she replied, feigning a demure sincerity, on the verge of her patience.

"You allow me to say it ?"

She gave him a look of fire and passed him ; whereat, following her, he clapped hands, and affected to regard the movement as part of an operatic scena. "It is now time to draw your dagger," he said. "You have one, I'm certain."

"Anything but touch me !" cried Vittoria, turning on him. "I know that I am safe. You shall tease me, if it amuses you."

"Am I not, now, the object of your detestation ?"

"You are near being so."

"You see ! You put on no disguise ; why should I ?"

This remark struck her with force.

"My temper is foolish," she said softly. "I have always been used to kindness."

He vowed that she had no comprehension of kindness ; otherwise would she continue defiant of him ? She denied that she was defiant : upon which he accused the hand in her bosom of clutching a dagger.

She cast the dagger at his feet. It was nobly done, and he was not insensible to the courage and inspiration of the act; for it checked a little example of a trial of strength that he had thought of exhibiting to an armed damsel.

“Shall I pick it up for you?” he said.

“You will oblige me,” was her answer; but she could not control a convulsion of her underlip that her defensive instinct told her was best hidden.

“Of course, you know you are safe,” he repeated her previous words, while examining the silver handle of the dagger. “Safe? certainly! Here is C. A. to V. . . A. neatly engraved: a gift; so that the young gentleman may be sure the young lady will defend herself from lions and tigers and wild boars, if ever she goes through forests and over mountain passes. I would not obtrude my curiosity, but who is V. . . A.?”

The dagger was Carlo’s gift to her; the engraver, by singular misadventure, had put a capital letter for the concluding letter of her name instead of little *a*; she remembered the blush on Carlo’s face when she had drawn his attention to the error, and her own blush when she had guessed its meaning.

“It spells my name,” she said.

“Your assumed named of Vittoria. And who is C. A.?”

"Those are the initials of Count Carlo Ammiani."

"Another lover?"

"He is my sole lover. He is my betrothed. Oh, good God!" she threw her eyes towards heaven; "how long am I to endure the torture of this man in my pathway? Go, sir, or let me go on. You are intolerable. It's the spirit of a tiger. I have no fear of you."

"Nay, nay," said Weisspriess, "I asked the question because I am under an obligation to run Count Carlo Ammiani through the body, and felt at once that I should regret the necessity. As to your not fearing me, really, far from wishing to hurt you——"

Vittoria had caught sight of a white face framed in the autumnal forest above her head. So keen was the glad expression of her face, that Weisspriess looked up.

"Come, Angelo, come to me," she said confidently.

Weisspriess plucked his sword out, and called to him imperiously to descend.

Beckoned downward by white hand and flashing blade, Angelo steadied his feet and hands among drooping chestnut boughs, and bounded to Vittoria's side.

"Now march on," Weisspriess waved his sword; "you are my prisoners."

"You," retorted Angelo; "I know you; you are

a man marked out for one of us. I bid you turn back, if you care for your body's safety."

"Angelo Guidascarpi, I also know you. Assassin! you double murderer! Defy me, and I slay you in the sight of your paramour."

"Captain Weisspriess, what you have spoken merits death. I implore of my Maker that I may not have to kill you."

"Fool! you are unarmed."

Angelo took his stilet in his fist.

"I have warned you, Captain Weisspriess. Here I stand. I dare you to advance."

"You pronounce my name abominably," said the captain, dropping his sword's point. "If you think of resisting me, let us have no women looking on." He waved his left hand at Vittoria.

Angelo urged her to go. "Step on for our Carlo's sake." But it was asking too much of her.

"Can you fight this man?" she asked.

"I can fight him and kill him."

"I will not step on," she said. "Must you fight him?"

"There is no choice."

Vittoria walked apart at once.

Angelo directed the captain's eyes to where, lower in the pass, there was a level plot of meadow.

Weisspriess nodded. "The odds are in my favour, so you shall choose the ground."

All three went silently to the meadow.

It was a circle of green on a projecting shoulder of the mountain, bounded by woods that sank towards the now shadowy, south-flowing Adige vale, whose western heights were gathering red colour above a strongly-marked brown line. Vittoria stood at the border of the wood, leaving the two men to their work. She knew when speech was useless.

Captain Weisspriess paced behind Angelo until the latter stopped short, saying, "Here!"

"Wherever you please," Weisspriess responded. "The ground is of more importance to you than to me."

They faced mutually; one felt the point of his stilet, the other the temper of his sword.

"Killing you, Angelo Guidascarpi, is the killing of a dog. But there are such things as mad dogs. This is not a duel. It is a righteous execution, since you force me to it: I shall deserve your thanks for saving you from the hangman. I think you have heard that I can use my weapon. There's death on this point for you. Make your peace with your Maker."

Weisspriess spoke sternly. He delayed the lifting of his sword that the bloody soul might pray.

Angelo said, "You are a good soldier: you are a bad priest. Come on."

A nod of magnanimous resignation to the duties of his office was the captain's signal of readiness. He knew exactly the method of fighting which Angelo must adopt, and he saw that his adversary was supple, and sinewy, and very keen of eye. But, what can well compensate for even one additional inch of steel? A superior weapon wielded by a trained wrist in perfect coolness means victory, by every reasonable reckoning. In the present instance, it meant nothing other than an execution, as he had said. His contemplation of his own actual share in the performance was nevertheless unpleasant; and it was but half willingly that he straightened out his sword and then doubled his arm. He lessened the odds in his favour considerably by his too accurate estimation of them. He was also a little unmanned by the thought that a woman was to see him using his advantage; but she stood firm in her distant corner, refusing to be waved out of sight. Weiss-priess had again to assure himself that it was not a duel, but the enforced execution of a criminal who would not surrender, and who was in his way. Fronting a creature that would vainly assail him, and temporarily escape impalement by bounding and

springing, dodging and backing, now here now there, like a dangling bob-cherry, his military gorge rose with a sickness of disgust. He had to remember as vividly as he could realise it, that this man's life was forfeited, and that the slaughter of him was a worthy service to Countess Anna; also, that there were present reasons for desiring to be quit of him. He gave Angelo two thrusts, and bled him. The skill which warded off the more vicious one aroused his admiration.

"Pardon my blundering," he said; "I have never engaged a saltimbanque before."

They recommenced. Weisspriess began to weigh the sagacity of his opponent's choice of open ground, where he could lengthen the discourse of steel by retreating and retreating, and swinging easily to right or to left. In the narrow track the sword would have transfixed him after a single feint. He was amused. Much of the cat was in his combative nature. An idea of disabling or dismembering Angelo, and forwarding him to Meran, caused him to trifle further with the edge of the blade. Angelo took a cut, and turned it on his arm, and, free of the deadly point, rushed in and delivered a stab; but Weisspriess saved his breast. Quick, they resumed their former positions.

"I am really so unused to this game!" said Weisspriess, apologetically.

He was pale: his unsteady breathing, and a deflection of his dripping sword-wrist, belied his coolness. Angelo plunged full on him, dropped, and again reached his right arm; they hung, getting blood for blood, with blazing interpenetrating eyes;—a ghastly work of dark hands, at half lock, thrusting, and savage eyes reading the fiery pages of the book of hell. At last the Austrian got loose from the lock, and hurled him off.

"That bout was hotter," he remarked; and kept his sword-point out on the whole length of the arm: he would have scorned another for so miserable a form, either for attack or defence.

Vittoria beheld Angelo circling round the point, which met him everywhere; like the minute hand of a clock about to sound his hour, she thought.

He let fall both his arms, as if beaten, which brought on the attack: by sheer evasion he got away from the sword's lunge, and essayed a second trial of the bite of steel at close quarters; but the Austrian backed and kept him to the point, darting short alluring thrusts, thinking to tempt him on, or to wind him, and then to have him. Weisspriess was chilled by a more curious revulsion from this sort of engage-

ment than he at first experienced. He had become nervously incapable of those proper niceties of sword-play which, without any indecent hacking and maiming, should have stretched Angelo, neatly slain, on the mat of green before he had a chance. Even now the sight of the man was distressing to an honourable duellist. Angelo was scored with blood-marks. Feeling that he dared not offer another chance to a fellow so desperately close-dealing, Weisspriess thrust fiercely, but delayed his fatal stroke. Angelo stooped and pulled up a handful of grass and soft earth in his left hand.

“We have been longer about it than I expected,” said Weisspriess.

Angelo tightened his fingers about the stringy grass-tuft; he stood like a dreamer, leaning over to the sword; suddenly he sprang on it, received the point right in his side, sprang on it again, and seized it in his hand, and tossed it up, and threw it square out in time to burst within guard and strike his stilet below the Austrian's collar-bone. The blade took a glut of blood, as when the wolf tears quick at dripping flesh. It was at a moment when Weissriess was courteously bantering him with the question whether he was ready, meaning that the affirmative should open the gates of death to him.

The stilet struck thrice. Weisspriess tottered, and hung his jaw like a man at a spectre: amazement was on his features.

“Remember Broncini and young Branciani!”

Angelo spoke no other words throughout the combat.

Weisspriess threw himself forward on a feeble lunge of his sword, and let the point sink in the ground, as a palsied cripple supports his frame, swayed, and called to Angelo to come on, and try another stroke, another—one more! He fell in a lump: his look of amazement was surmounted by a strong frown.

His enemy was hanging above him panting out of wide nostrils, like a hunter's horse above the long-tongued quarry, when Vittoria came to them.

She reached her strength to the wounded man to turn his face to heaven.

He moaned, “Finish me;” and as he lay with his back to earth, “Good evening to the old army!”

A vision of leaping tumbrils, and long marching columns about to deploy, passed before his eyelids: he thought he had fallen on the battle-field, and heard a drum beat furiously in the back of his head; and on streamed the cavalry, wonderfully caught away to such a distance that the figures were all

diminutive, and the regimental colours swam in smoke, and the enemy danced a plume here and there out of the sea, while his mother and a forgotten Viennese girl gazed at him with exactly the same unfamiliar countenance, and refused to hear that they were unintelligible in the roaring of guns and floods and hurrahs, and the thumping of the tremendous big drum behind his head—"somewhere in the middle of the earth:" he tried to explain the locality of that terrible drumming noise to them, and Vittoria conceived him to be delirious; but he knew that he was sensible: he knew her and Angelo and the mountain-pass, and that he had a cigar-case in his pocket worked in embroidery of crimson, blue, and gold, by the hands of Countess Anna. He said distinctly that he desired the cigar-case to be delivered to Countess Anna at the castle of Sonnenberg, and rejoiced on being assured that his wish was comprehended and should be fulfilled; but the marvel was, that his mother should still refuse to give him wine, and suppose him to be a boy: and when he was so thirsty and dry-lipped that though Mina was bending over him, just fresh from Mariazell, he had not the heart to kiss her or lift an arm to her!—His horse was off with him—whither?—He was going down with a company of infantry in the Gulf

of Venice : cards were in his hand, visible, though he could not feel them, and as the vessel settled for the black plunge, the cards flushed all honours, and his mother shook her head at him : he sank, and heard Mina sighing all the length of the water to the bottom, which grated and gave him two horrid shocks of pain ; and he cried for a doctor, and admitted that his horse had managed to throw him ; but wine was the cure, brandy was the cure, or water, water !

Water was sprinkled on his forehead and put to his lips.

He thanked Vittoria by name, and imagined himself that general, serving under old Würmser, of whom the tale is told that being shot and lying grievously wounded on the harsh Rivoli ground, he obtained the help of a French officer in as bad case as himself, to moisten his black tongue and write a short testamentary document with his blood, and for a way of returning thanks to the Frenchman, he put down, among others, the name of his friendly enemy's widow ; whereupon both resigned their hearts to death ; but the Austrian survived to find the sad widow and espouse her.

His mutterings were full of gratitude, showing a vividly transient impression to what was about him,

that vanished in an arrow-headed flight through clouds into lands of memory. It pained him, he said, that he could not offer her marriage; but he requested that when his chin was shaved his moustache should be brushed up out of the way of the clippers, for he and all his family were conspicuous for the immense amount of life which they had in them, and his father had lain six-and-thirty hours bleeding on the field of Wagram, and had yet survived to beget a race as hearty as himself:—"Old Austria! thou grand old Austria!"

The smile was proud, though faint, which accompanied the apostrophe, addressed either to his country or to his father's personification of it; it was inexpressibly pathetic to Vittoria, who understood his 'Oesterreich,' and saw the weak and helpless bleeding man, with his eyeballs working under the lids, and the palms of his hands stretched out open—weak as a corpse, but conquering death.

The arrival of Jacopo and Johann furnished help to carry him onward to the nearest place of shelter. Angelo would not quit her side until he had given money and directions to both the trembling fellows, together with his name, that they might declare the author of the deed at once if questioned. He then bowed to Vittoria slightly and fled. They did not speak.

The last sunbeams burned full crimson on the heights of the Adige mountains as Vittoria followed the two pale men who bore the wounded officer between them at a slow pace towards the nearest village in the descent of the pass.

Angelo watched them out of sight. The far-off red rocks spun round his eye-balls; the meadow was a whirling thread of green; the brown earth heaved up to him. He felt that he was diving, and had the thought that there was but water enough to moisten his red hands when his senses left him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A NEW ORDEAL.

THE old city of Meran faces southward to the yellow hills of Italy, across a broad vale, between two mountain-walls and torrent-waters. With one hand it takes the bounding green Passeyr, and with the other the brown-rolling Adige, and plunges them together in roaring foam under the shadow of the western wall. It stands on the spur of a lower central eminence crowned by a grey castle, and the sun has it from every aspect. The shape of a swan in water may describe its position, for the Vintschgau and the stony Passeyrthal make a strong curve on two sides as they descend upon it with their rivers, and the bosom of the city projects, while the head appears bending gracefully backward. Many castles are in view of it; the loud and tameless Passeyr girdles it with an emerald cincture; there is a sea of arched vineyard foliage at his feet.

Vittoria reached the castle of Sonnenberg about noon, and found empty courts and open doors. She sat in the hall like a suppliant, disregarded by the German domestics, who beheld a travel-stained, humble-faced, young Italian woman, and supposed that their duty was done in permitting her to rest; but the duchess's maid, Aennchen, happening to come by, questioned her in moderately intelligible Italian, and hearing her name gave a cry, and said that all the company were out hunting, shooting, and riding, in the vale below or the mountain above. "Ah, dearest lady, what a fright we have all been in about you! Signora Piaveni has not slept a wink, and the English gentleman has made great excursions every day to find you. This morning the soldier Wilhelm arrived with news that his master was bringing you on."

Vittoria heard that Laura and her sister and the duchess had gone down to Meran. Countess Lena von Lenkenstein was riding to see her betrothed shoot on a neighbouring estate. Countess Anna had disappeared early, none knew where. Both these ladies, and their sister-in-law, were in mourning for the terrible death of their brother, Count Paul. Aennchen repeated what she knew of the tale concerning him.

The desire to see Laura first, and be embraced and counselled by her, and lie awhile in her arms to get a breath of home, made Vittoria refuse to go up to her chamber, and notwithstanding Aennchenn's persuasions, she left the castle, and went out and sat in the shaded cart-track. On the winding ascent she saw a lady in a black riding habit, leading her horse and talking to a soldier, who seemed to be receiving orders from her, and presently saluted and turned his steps downwards. The lady came on, and passed her without a glance. After entering the court-yard, where she left her horse, she reappeared, and stood hesitating, but came up to Vittoria and said bluntly, in Italian:—

“Are you the Signorina Campa, or Belloni, who is expected here?”

The Austrian character and colouring of her features told Vittoria that this must be the Countess Anna or her sister.

“I think I have been expected,” she replied.

“You come alone?”

“I am alone.”

“I am Countess Anna von Lenkenstein; one of the guests of the castle.”

“My message is to the Countess Anna.”

“You have a message?”

Vittoria lifted the embroidered cigar-case. Countess Anna snatched it from her hand.

“What does this mean? Is it insolence? Have the kindness, if you please, not to address me in enigmas. Do you”—Anna was deadly pale as she turned the cigar-case from side to side—“do you imagine that I smoke, *par hasard*?” She tried to laugh off her intemperate manner of speech; the laugh broke at sight of a blood-mark on one corner of the case; she started, and said earnestly, “I beg you to let me hear what the meaning of this may be?”

“He lies in the Ultenthal, wounded; and his wish was that I should deliver it to you.” Vittoria spoke as gently as the harsh tidings would allow.

“Wounded? My God! my God!” Anna cried in her own language. “Wounded?—in the breast, then! He carried it in his breast. Wounded by what? by what?”

“I can tell you no more.”

“Wounded by whom?”

“It was an honourable duel.”

“Are you afraid to tell me he has been assassinated?”

“It was an honourable duel.”

“None could match him with the sword.”

"His enemy had nothing but a dagger."

"Who was his enemy?"

"It is no secret, but I must leave him to say."

"You were a witness of the fight?"

"I saw it all."

"The man was one of your party!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Vittoria, "lose no time with me, Countess Anna; go to him at once, for though he lived when I left him, he was bleeding; I cannot say that he was not dying, and he has not a friend near."

Anna murmured like one overborne by calamity. "My brother struck down one day—he the next!" She covered her face a moment, and unclosed it to explain that she wept for her brother, who had been murdered, stabbed in Bologna.

"Was it Count Ammiani who did this?" she asked passionately.

Vittoria shook her head; she was divining a dreadful thing in relation to the death of Count Paul.

"It was not?" said Anna. "They had a misunderstanding, I know. But you tell me the man fought with a dagger. It could not be Count Ammiani. The dagger is an assassin's weapon, and there are men of honour in Italy still."

She called to a servant in the castle-yard, and

sent him down with orders to stop the soldier Wilhelm.

"We heard this morning that you were coming, and we thought it curious," she observed; and called again for her horse to be saddled. "How far is this place where he is lying? I have no knowledge of the Ultenthal. Has he a doctor attending him? When was he wounded? It is but common humanity to see that he is attended by an efficient doctor. My nerves are unstrung by the recent blow to our family; that is why—— Oh, my father! my holy father!" she turned to a grey priest's head that was rising up the ascent, "I thank God for you! Lena is away riding; she weeps constantly when she is within four walls. Come in and give me tears, if you can; I am half mad for the want of them. Tears first; teach me patience after."

The old priest fanned his face with his tri-curved hat, and raised one hand as he uttered a gentle chiding in reproof of curbless human sorrow. Anna said to Vittoria, coldly, "I thank you for your message;" she walked into the castle by his side, and said to him there: "The woman you saw outside has a guilty conscience. You will spend your time more profitably with her than with me. I am past all religious duties at this moment. You know, father, that

I *can* open my heart. Probe this Italian woman ; search her through and through. I believe her to be blood-stained and abominable. She hates us. She has sworn an oath against us. She is malignant."

It was not long before Anna issued forth and rode towards the vale. The priest beckoned to Vittoria from the gates. He really supposed her to have come to him with a burdened spirit.

"My daughter," he addressed her. The chapter on human error was opened:—"We are all of one family—all of us erring children—all of us bound to abnegate hatred: by love alone are we saved. Behold the Image of Love—the Virgin and Child. Alas! and has it been visible to man these more than eighteen hundred years, and humankind are still blind to it? Are their ways the ways of comfort and blessedness? Their ways are the ways of blood; paths to eternal misery among howling fiends. Why have they not chosen the sweet ways of peace, which are strewn with flowers, which flow with milk?"—The priest spread his hand open for Vittoria's, which she gave to his keeping, and he enclosed it softly, smoothing it with his palms, and retaining it as a worldly oyster between spiritual shells. "Why, my daughter, why, but because we do not bow to that image daily, nightly, hourly, mo-

mently ! We do not worship it that its seed may be sown in us. We do not cling to it, that in return it may cling to us."

He spoke with that sensuous resource of rich feeling which the contemplation of the Image does inspire. And Vittoria was not led reluctantly into the oratory of the castle to pray with him ; but she refused to confess. Thereupon followed a soft discussion that was as near being acerb as nails are near velvet paws.

Vittoria perceived his drift, and also the dear good heart of the old man, who meant no harm to her, and believed that he was making use of his professional weapons for her ultimate good. The inquisitions and the kindness went musically together ; she responded to the kindness, but rebutted the inquisitions ; at which he permitted a shade of discontent to traverse his features, and asked her with immense tenderness whether she had not much on her mind ; she expressing melodious gratitude for his endeavours to give her comfort. He could not forbear directing an admonishment to her stubborn spirit, and was obliged, for the sake of impressiveness, to speak it harshly ; until he saw that, without sweetness of manner and unction of speech, he left her untouched ; so he was driven back

to the form of address better suited to his nature and habits; the end of which was that both were cooing.

Vittoria was ashamed to tell herself how much she liked him and his ghostly brethren, whose preaching was always of peace, while the world was full of lurid hatred, strife, and division. She begged the baffled old man to keep her hand in his. He talked in Latinised Italian, and only appeared to miss the exact meaning of her replies when his examination of the state of her soul was resumed. They sat in the soft colour of the consecrated place like two who were shut away from earth. Often he thought that her tears were about to start and bring her low; for she sighed heavily; at the mere indication of the displacement of her hand, she looked at him eagerly, as if entreating him not to let it drop.

“You are a German, father?” she said.

“I am of German birth, my daughter.”

“That makes it better. Remain beside me. The silence is sweet music.”

The silence was broken at intervals by his murmur of a call for patience! patience!

This strange scene concluded with the entry of the duchess, who retired partly as soon as she saw them. Vittoria smiled to the old man, and quitted

his side: [the duchess gave her a hushed welcome, and took her place. Vittoria was soon in Laura's arms, where, after a storm of grief, she related the events of the journey following her flight from Milan. Laura interrupted her but once to exclaim, "Angelo Guidascarpi!" Vittoria then heard from her briefly that Milan was quiet, Carlo Ammiani in prison. It had been for tidings of her lover that she had hastened over the mountains to Meran. She craved for all that could be told of him, but Laura repeated, as in a stupefaction, "Angelo Guidascarpi!" She answered Vittoria's question by saying, "You could not have had so fatal a companion."

"I could not have had so devoted a protector."

"There is such a thing as an evil star. We are all under it at present, to some degree; but he has been under it from his birth. My Sandra, my beloved, I think I have pardoned you, if I ever pardon any one! I doubt it; but it is certain that I love you. You have seen Countess Anna, or I would have told you to rest and get over your fatigue. The Lenkensteins are here—my poor sister among them. You must show yourself. I was provident enough to call at your mother's for a box of your clothes before I ran out of wretched Milan."

Further, the signora stated that Carlo might have to remain in prison. She made no attempt to give dark or fair colour to the misery of the situation; telling Vittoria to lie on her bed and sleep, if sleep could be persuaded to visit her, she went out to consult with the duchess. Vittoria lay like a dead body on the bed, counting the throbs of her heart. It helped her to fall into a state of insensibility. When she awoke, the room was dark; she felt that some one had put a silken cushion across her limbs. The noise of a storm traversing the vale rang through the castle, and in the desolation of her soul, that stealthy act of kindness wrought in her so that she almost fashioned a vow upon her lips that she would leave the world to toss its wrecks, and dedicate her life to God.

For, O Heaven! of what avail is human effort? She thought of the chief whose life was stainless, but who stood proscribed because his aim was too high to be attained within compass of a mortal's years. His error seemed that he had ever aimed at all. He seemed less wise than the old priest of the oratory. She could not disentangle him from her own profound humiliation and sense of fallen power. Her lover's imprisonment accused her of some monstrous culpability, which she felt unrepentingly, not

as we feel a truth, but as we submit to a terrible force of pressure.

The morning light made her realize Carlo's fate, to whom it would penetrate through a hideous barred loophole—a defaced and dreadful beam. She asked herself why she had fled from Milan. It must have been some cowardly instinct that had prompted her to fly. “Coward, coward! thing of vanity! you, a mere woman!” she cried out, and succeeded in despising herself sufficiently to think it possible that she had deserved to forfeit her lover's esteem.

It was still early when the duchess's maid came to her, bringing word that her mistress would be glad to visit her. From the duchess Vittoria heard of the charge against Angelo. Respecting Captain Weisspriess, Amalia said that she had perceived his object in wishing to bring the great cantatrice to the castle; and that it was a well-devised audacious scheme to subdue Countess Anna:—“We Austrians also can be jealous. The difference between us is, that it makes us tender, [and you Italians savage.” She asked pointedly for an affirmative, that Vittoria was glad to reply with, when she said: “Captain Weisspriess was perfectly respectful to you?” She spoke comforting words of Carlo Ammiani, whom she hoped to see released as soon as the excitement had

subsided. The chief comfort she gave was by saying that he had been originally arrested in mistake for his cousin Angelo.

“I will confide what is now my difficulty here frankly to you,” said the duchess. “The Lenkensteins are my guests; I thought it better to bring them here. Angelo Guidascarpì has slain their brother—a base deed! It does not affect you in my eyes; you can understand that in theirs it does. Your being present—Laura has told me everything—at the duel, or fight, between that young man and Captain Weisspriess, will make you appear as his accomplice—at least, to Anna it will; she is the most unreasoning, the most implacable of women. She returned from the Ultenthal last night, and goes there there this morning, which is a sign that Captain Weisspriess lives. I should be sorry if we lost so good an officer. As she is going to take Father Bernardus with her, it is possible that the wound is serious. Do you know, you have mystified the worthy man exceedingly? What tempted you to inform him that your conscience was heavily burdened, at the same time that you refused to confess?”

“Surely he has been deluded about me,” said Vittoria.

“I do but tell you his state of mind in regard to you,” the duchess pursued. “Under all the circumstances, this is what I have to ask: you are my Laura’s guest, therefore the guest of my heart. There is another one here, an Englishman, a Mr. Powys; and also Lieutenant Pierson, whom, naughty rebel that you are, you have been the means of bringing into disgrace; naturally you would wish to see them: but my request is, that you should keep to these rooms for two or three days: the Lenkensteins will then be gone. They can hardly reproach me for retaining an invalid. If you go down among them, it will be a cruel meeting.

Vittoria thankfully consented to the arrangement. They agreed to act in accordance with it.

The signora was a late riser. The duchess had come on a second visit to Vittoria when Laura joined them, and hearing of the arrangement, spurned the notion of playing craven before the Lenkensteins, who, she said, might think as it pleased them to think, but were never to suppose that there was any fear of confronting them. “And now, at this very moment, when they have their triumph, and are laughing over Viennese squibs at her, she has an idea of hiding her head—she hangs out the white flag! It can’t be. We go or we stay; but if we stay, the

truth is that we are too poor to allow our enemies to think poorly of us. You, Amalia, are victorious, and you may snap your fingers at opinion. It is a luxury we cannot afford. Besides, I wish her to see my sister and make acquaintance with the Austrianised Italian—such a wonder as is nowhere to be seen out of the Serabiglione and in the Lenkenstein family. Marriage is, indeed, a tremendous transformation. Bianca was once declared to be very like me.”

The brow-beaten duchess replied to the outburst that she had considered it right to propose the scheme for Vittoria’s seclusion on account of the Guidascarpi.

“Even if that were a good reason, there are better on the other side,” said Laura; adding, with many little backward tosses of the head, “*that* story has to be related in full before I denounce Angelo and Rinaldo.”

“It cannot be denied that they are assassins,” returned the duchess.

“It cannot be denied that they have killed one man or more. For you, Justice drops from the bough: *we* have to climb and risk our necks for it. Angelo stood to defend my darling here. Shall she be ashamed of him?”

“You will never persuade me to tolerate assassination,” said the duchess, colouring.

“Never, never; I shall never persuade you; never persuade—never attempt to persuade any foreigner that we can be driven to extremes where their laws do not apply to us—are not good for us—goad a subjected people till their madness is pardonable. Nor shall I dream of persuading you that Angelo did right in defending her from that man.”

“I maintain that there are laws applicable to all human creatures,” said the duchess. “You astonish me when you speak compassionately of such a criminal.”

“No; not of such a criminal, of such an unfortunate youth, and my countryman, when every hand is turned against him, and all tongues are reviling him. But let Angelo pass; I pray to heaven he may escape. All who are worth anything in our country are strained in every fibre, and it’s my trick to be half in love with any one of them when he is persecuted. I fancy he is worth more than the others, and is simply luckless. You must make allowances for us, Amalia—pity captive Judah!”

“I think, my Laura, you will never be satisfied till I have ceased to be Babylonian,” said the duchess,

smiling and fondling Vittoria, to whom she said, "Am I not a complaisant German?"

Vittoria replied gently, "If they were like you!"

"Yes, if they were like the duchess," said Laura, "nothing would be left for us then but to hate ourselves. Fortunately, we deal with brutes."

She was quite pitiless in prompting Vittoria to hasten down, and marvelled at the evident reluctance in doing this slight duty, of one whose courage she had recently seen rise so high. Vittoria was equally amazed by her want of sympathy, which was positive coldness, and her disregard for the sentiments of her hostess. She dressed hesitatingly, responding with forlorn eyes to Laura's imperious "Come." When at last she was ready to descend, Laura took her down, full of battle. The duchess had gone in advance to keep the peace.

The ladies of the Lenkenstein family were standing at one window of the morning room conversing. Apart from them, Merthyr Powys and Wilfrid were examining one of the cumbrous antique arms ranged along the wall. The former of these old English friends stepped up to Vittoria quickly and kissed her forehead. Wilfrid hung behind him; he made a poor show of indifference, stammered English and reddened; remembering that he was under observa-

tion he recovered wonderfully, and asked, like a patron, "How is the voice?" which would have been foolish enough to Vittoria's more attentive hearing. She thanked him for the service he had rendered her at La Scala. Countess Lena, who looked hard at both, saw nothing to waken one jealous throb.

"Bianca, you expressed a wish to give a salute to my eldest daughter," said Laura.

The Countess of Lenkenstein turned her head, "Have I done so?"

"It is my duty to introduce her," interposed the duchess, and conducted the ceremony with a show of its embracing these ladies, neither one of whom changed her cold gaze.

Careful that no pause should follow, she commenced chatting to the ladies and gentlemen alternately, keeping Vittoria under her peculiar charge. Merthyr alone seconded her efforts to weave the web of converse, which is an armistice if not a treaty on these occasions.

"Have you any fresh caricatures from Vienna?" Laura continued to address her sister.

"None have reached me," said the neutral countess.

"Have they finished laughing?"

"I cannot tell."

“At any rate, we sing still,” Laura smiled to Vittoria. “You shall hear us after breakfast. I regret excessively that you were not in Milan on the Fifteenth. We will make amends to you as much as possible. You shall hear us after breakfast. You will sing to please my sister, Sandra mia, will you not?”

Vittoria shook her head. Like those who have become passive, she read faces—the duchess’s imploring looks thrown from time to time to the Lenkenstein ladies, Wilfrid’s oppressed forehead, the resolute neutrality of the countess—and she was not only incapable of seconding Laura’s aggressive war, but shrank from the involvement and sickened at the indelicacy. Anna’s eyes were fixed on her and filled her with dread lest she should be resolving to demand a private interview.

“You refuse to sing?” said Laura; and under her breath, “when I bid you not, you insist!”

“Can she possibly sing before she grows accustomed to the air of the place?” said the duchess.

“Merthyr gravely prescribed a week’s diet on grapes antecedent to the issuing of a note. “Have you never heard what a sustained grape-diet will do for the bullfinches?”

“Never,” exclaimed the duchess. “Is that the secret of their German education?”

“Apparently, for we cannot raise them to the same pitch of perfection in England.”

“I will try it upon mine. Every morning they shall have two big bunches.”

“Fresh plucked, and with the first sunlight on them. Be careful of the rules.”

Wilfrid remarked, “To make them exhibit the results, you withdraw the benefit suddenly, of course?”

“We imitate the general run of Fortune’s gifts as much as we can,” said Merthyr.

“That is the training for little shrill parrots: we have none in Italy,” Laura sighed, mock dolefully; “I fear the system would fail among us.”

“It certainly would not build Como villas,” said Lena.

Laura cast sharp eyes on her pretty face.

“It is adapted for caged voices that are required to chirrup to tickle the ears of boors.”

Anna said to the duchess: “I hope your little birds are all well this morning.”

“Come to them presently with me and let our ears be tickled,” the duchess laughed in answer; and the pale, spiked dialogue broke, not to revive.

The duchess had observed the constant direction of Anna’s eyes upon Vittoria during the repast, and

looked an interrogation at Anna, who replied to it firmly. "I must be present," the duchess whispered. She drew Vittoria away by the hand, telling Merthyr Powys that it was unkind to him, but that he should be permitted to claim his fair friend from noon to the dinner-bell.

Laura and Bianca were discussing the same subject as the one for which Anna desired an interview with Vittoria. It was to know the conditions and cause of the duel between Angelo Guidascarpì and Captain Weisspriess, and whither Angelo had fled. "In other words, you cry for vengeance under the name of justice," Laura phrased it, and put up a prayer for Angelo's escape.

The countess rebuked her. "It is men like Angelo who are a scandal to Italy."

"Proclaimed so; but by what title are they judged?" Laura retorted. "I have heard that his duel with Count Paul was fair, and that the grounds for it were just. Deplore it; but to condemn an Italian gentleman without hearing his personal vindication, is infamous; nay, it is Austrian. I know next to nothing of the story. Countess Ammiani has assured me that the brothers have a clear defence—not from your Vienna point of view: Italy and Vienna are different sides of the shield."

Vittoria spoke most humbly before Anna; her sole irritating remark was, that even if she were aware of the direction of Angelo's flight, she would not betray him.

The duchess did her utmost to induce her to see that he was a criminal, outlawed from common charity. "These Italians are really like the Jews," she said to Anna; "they appear to me to hold together by a bond of race: you cannot get them to understand that any act can be infamous when one of their blood is guilty of it."

Anna thought gloomily: "Then, why do you ally yourself to them?"

The duchess, with Anna, Lena, and Wilfrid, drove to the Ultenthal. Vittoria and Merthyr had a long afternoon of companionship. She had been shyer in meeting him than in meeting Wilfrid, whom she had once loved. The tie between herself and Wilfrid was broken; but Merthyr had remained true to his passionless affection, which ennobled him to her so that her heart fluttered, though she was heavily depressed. He relieved her by letting her perceive that Carlo Ammiani's merits were not unknown to him. Merthyr smiled at Carlo for abjuring his patrician birth. He said: "Count Ammiani will be cured in time of those little roughnesses of his

adopted Republicanism. You must help to cure him. Women are never so foolish as men in these things."

When Merthyr had spoken thus, she felt that she might dare to press his hand. Sharing friendship with this steadfast nature and brotherly gentleman ; who was in the ripe manhood of his years ; who loved Italy and never despaired ; who gave great affection, and took uncomplainingly the possible return for it ;—seemed like entering on a great plain open to boundless heaven. She thought that friendship was sweeter than love. Merthyr soon left the castle to meet his sister at Coire. Laura and Vittoria drove some distance up the Vintschgau, on the way to the Engadine, with him. He affected not to be down-cast by the failure of the last attempt at a rising in Milan. "Keep true to your art ; and don't let it be subservient to anything," he said, and his final injunction to her was that she should get a *German* master and practise rigidly.

Vittoria could only look at Laura in reply.

"He is for us, but not of us," said Laura, as she kissed her fingers to him.

"If he had told me to weep and pray," Vittoria murmured, "I think I should by-and-by lift up my head."

“By-and-by! By-and-by I think I see a convent for me,” said Laura.

Their faces drooped.

Vittoria cried: “Ah! did he mean that my singing at La Scala was below the mark?”

At this, Laura’s laughter came out in a volume. “And that excellent Father Bernardus thinks he is gaining a convert!” she said.

Vittoria’s depression was real, though her strong vitality appeared to mock it. Letters from Milan, enclosed to the duchess, spoke of Carlo Ammiani’s imprisonment as a matter that might be indefinitely prolonged. His mother had been subjected to an examination; she had not hesitated to confess that she had received her nephew in her house, but it could not be established against her that it was not Carlo whom she had passed off to the sbirri as her son. Countess Ammiani wrote to Laura, telling her she scarcely hoped that Carlo would obtain his liberty save upon the arrest of Angelo:—“Therefore, what I most desire, I dare not pray for!” That line of intense tragic grief haunted Vittoria like a veiled head thrusting itself between the sunlight. Countess Ammiani added that she must give her son what news she could gather:—“Concerning *you*,” said Laura, interpreting the sentence: “bitter days do

this good, they make a proud woman abjure the traditions of her caste." A guarded answer was addressed, according to the countess's directions, to Sarpò the bookseller, in Milan. For purposes of such a nature, Barto Rizzo turned the uneasy craven to account.

It happened that one of the maids at Sonnenberg was about to marry a peasant of Meran, part proprietor of a vineyard, and the nuptials were to be celebrated at the castle. Among those who thronged the courtyard on the afternoon of the ceremony, Vittoria beheld her faithful Beppo, who related the story of his pursuit of her, and the perfidy of Luigi;—a story so lengthy, that his voluble tongue running at full speed could barely give the outlines of it. He informed her, likewise, that he had been sent for, while lying in Trent, by Captain Weisspriess, whom he had seen at an inn of the Ultenthal, weak but improving. Beppo was the captain's propitiatory offering to Vittoria. Meanwhile the ladies sat on a terrace, overlooking the court, where a stout fellow in broad green braces and blue breeches lay half across a wooden table, thrumming a zither, which set the groups in motion. The zither is a melancholy little instrument; in range of expression it is to the harp what the winchat is to the thrush; or to the

violin, what that bird is to the nightingale ; yet few instruments are so exciting : here and there along these mountain valleys you may hear a Tyrolese maid set her voice to its plaintive thin tones ; but when the strings are swept madly there is mad dancing ; it catches at the nerves. “ Andreas ! Andreas ! ” the dancers shouted to encourage the player. Some danced with vine-poles ; partners broke and wandered at will, taking fresh partners, and occasionally huddling in confusion, when the poles were levelled and tilted at them, and they dispersed. Beppo, dancing mightily to recover the use of his legs, met his acquaintance Jacob Baumwalder Feckelwitz, and the pair devoted themselves to a rivalry of capers ; jump, stamp, shuffle, leg aloft, arms in air, yell and shriek : all took hands around them and streamed, tramping the measure, and the vine-poles guarded the ring. Then Andreas raised the song : “ Our Lady is gracious,” and immediately the whole assemblage were singing praise to the lady of the castle. Following which, wine being brought to Andreas, he drank to his lady, to his lady’s guests, to the bride, to the bridegroom,—to everybody. He was now ready to improvise, and dashed thumb and finger on the zither, tossing up his face, swarthy-flushed : “ There was a steinbock with a beard.” Half-a-

dozen voices repeated it, as to proclaim the theme.

“Alas! a beard, indeed, for there is no end to this animal. I know him;” said the duchess, dolefully.

“There was a steinbock with a beard;

Of no gun was he afraid:

Piff-paff left of him: piff-paff right of him:

Piff-paff everywhere, where you get a sight of him.”

The steinbock led through the whole course of a mountaineer's emotions and experiences, with piff-paff continually left of him and right of him, and nothing hitting him. The mountaineer is perplexed; an able man, a dead shot, who must undo the puzzle or lose faith in his skill, is a tremendous pursuer, and the mountaineer follows the steinbock ever. A sennnderin at a sennhütchen tells him that she admitted the steinbock last night, and her curled hair *frizzled* under the steinbock's eyes. The case is only too clear: my goodness! the steinbock is the ——. “*Der Teu . . . !*” said Andreas, with a comic stop of horror, the rhyme falling cleverly to “*ai.*” Henceforth the mountaineer becomes transformed into a champion of humanity, hunting the wicked bearded steinbock in all corners; especially through the cabinet of those dark men who decree the taxes detested in Tyrol.

The song had as yet but fairly commenced, when a break in the 'piff-paff' chorus warned Andreas that he was losing influence, women and men were handing on a paper and bending their heads over it; their responses hushed altogether, or were ludicrously inefficient.

"I really believe the poor brute has come to a Christian finish—this Ahasuerus of steinbocks!" said the duchess.

The transition to silence was so extraordinary and abrupt, that she called to her chasseur to know the meaning of it. Feckelwitz fetched the paper and handed it up. It exhibited a cross done in blood under the word 'Meran,' and bearing that day's date. One glance at it told Laura what it meant. The bride in the court below was shedding tears; the bridegroom was lighting his pipe and consoling her: women were chattering, men shrugging. Some said they had seen an old grey-haired hag (*hexe*) stand at the gates and fling down a piece of paper. A little boy whose imagination was alive with the tale of the steinbock, declared that her face was awful, and that she had only the use of one foot. A man patted him on the shoulder, and gave him a gulp of wine, saying with his shrewdest air: "One may laugh at the devil once too often, though!" and that sentiment was

echoed; the women suggested in addition the possibility of the bride Lisa having something on her conscience, seeing that she had lived in a castle two years and more. The potential persuasions of Father Bernardus were required to get the bride to go away to her husband's roof that evening: when she did make her departure, the superstitious peasantry were not a merry party that followed at her heels.

Towards the break-up of the festivities, Wilfrid received an intimation that his sister had arrived in Meran from Bormio. He went down to see her, and returned at a late hour. The ladies had gone to rest. He wrote a few underlined words, entreating Vittoria to grant him an immediate interview in the library of the castle. The missive was entrusted to Aennchen. Vittoria came in alarm.

"My sister is perfectly well," said Wilfrid. "She has heard that Captain Gambier has been arrested in the mountains; she had some fears concerning you, which I quieted. What I have to tell you, does not relate to her. The man Angelo Guidascari is in Meran. I wish you to let the signora know that if he is not carried out of the city before sunset tomorrow, I must positively inform the superior officer of the district of his presence there."

This was their first private interview. Vittoria

(for she knew him) had acceded to it, much fearing that it would lead to her having to put on her sex's armour. To collect her wits, she asked tremblingly how Wilfrid had chanced to see Angelo. An old Italian woman, he said, had accosted him at the foot of the mountain, and hearing that he was truly an Englishman—"I am out of my uniform," Wilfrid remarked with intentional bitterness—had conducted him to the house of an Italian in the city, where Angelo Guidascarpi was lying.

"Ill?" said Vittoria.

"Just recovering. After that duel, or whatever it may be called, with Weisspriess, he lay all night out on the mountains. He managed to get the help of a couple of fellows, who led him at dusk into Meran, saw an Italian name over a shop, and—I will say for them, that the rascals hold together. There he is, at all events."

"Would you denounce a sick man, Wilfrid?"

"I certainly cannot forget my duty upon every point?"

"You are changed!"

"Changed! Am I the only one who is changed?"

"He must have supposed that it would be Merthyr. I remember speaking of Merthyr to him as

our unchangeable friend. I told him Merthyr would be here."

"Instead of Merthyr, he had the misfortune to see your changeable friend, if you will have it so."

"But how can it be your duty to denounce him, Wilfrid? You have quitted that army."

"Have I? I have forfeited my rank, perhaps."

"And Angelo is not guilty of a military offence."

"He has slain one of a family that I am bound to respect."

"Certainly, certainly," said Vittoria, hurriedly.

Her forehead showed distress of mind; she wanted Laura's counsel.

"Wilfrid, do you know the whole story?"

"I know that he inveigled Count Paul to his house and slew him; either he or his brother, or both."

"I have been with him for days, Wilfrid. I believe that he would do no dishonourable thing. He is related——"

"He is the cousin of Count Ammiani."

"Ah! would you plunge us in misery?"

"How?"

"Count Ammiani is my lover."

She uttered it unblushingly, and with tender eyes fixed on him.

“Your lover!” he exclaimed, with vile emphasis.

“He will be my husband,” she murmured, while the mounting hot colour burned at her temples.

“Changed—who is changed?” he said, in a vehement underbreath. “For that reason I am to be false to her who does me the honour to care for me!”

“I would not have you false to her in thought or deed.”

“You ask me to spare this man on account of his relationship to your lover, and though he has murdered the brother of the lady whom I esteem. What on earth is the meaning of the petition? Really, you amaze me.”

“I appeal to your generosity, Wilfrid. I am Emilia.”

“Are you?”

She gave him her hand. He took it, and felt at once the limit of all that he might claim. Dropping the hand, he said:—

“Will nothing less than my ruin satisfy you? Since that night at La Scala, I am in disgrace with my uncle; I expect at any moment to hear that I am cashiered from the army, if not a prisoner. What is it that you ask of me now? To conspire with you in shielding the man who has done a mortal injury

to the family of which I am almost one. Your reason must perceive that you ask too much. I would willingly assist you in sparing the feelings of Count Ammiani; and, believe me, gratitude is the last thing I require to stimulate my services. You ask too much; you must see that you ask too much."

"I do," said Vittoria. "Good night, Wilfrid."

He was startled to find her going, and lost his equable voice in trying to detain her. She sought relief in Laura's bosom, to whom she recapitulated the interview.

"Is it possible," Laura said looking at her intently, "that you do not recognise the folly of telling this Lieutenant Pierson that you were pleading to him on behalf of your lover? Could anything be so monstrous, when one can see that he is malleable to the twist of your little finger? Are you only half a woman, that you have no consciousness of your power? Probably you can allow yourself—enviable privilege!—to suppose that he called you down at this late hour simply to inform you that he is compelled to do something which will cause you unhappiness! I repeat, it is an enviable privilege. Now, when the real occasion has come for you to serve us, you have not a single weapon—except these tears,

which you are wasting on my lap. Be sure that if he denounces Angelo, Angelo's life cries out against you. You have but to quicken your brain to save him. Did he expose his life for you or not? I knew that he was in Meran," the signora continued sadly. "The paper which frightened the silly peasants, revealed to me that he was there, needing help. I told you Angelo was under an evil star. I thought my day to-morrow would be a day of scheming. The task has become easy, if you will."

"Be merciful; the task is dreadful," said Vittoria.—"The task is simple. You have an instrument ready to your hands. You can do just what you like with him—make an Italian of him; make him renounce his engagement to this pert little Lena of Lenkenstein, break his sword, play Arlecchino, do what you please. He is not required for any outrageous performance. A week, and Angelo will have recovered his strength; you likewise may resume the statuesque demeanour which you have been exhibiting here. For the space of one week you are asked for some natural exercise of your wits and compliancy. Hitherto what have you accomplished, pray?" Laura struck spitefully at Vittoria's degraded estimation of her worth as measured by events. "You have done nothing—worse than nothing. It

gives me horrors 'to find it necessary to entreat you to look your duty in the face and do it, that even three or four Italian hearts—Carlo among them—may thank you. Not Carlo, you say?" (Vittoria had sobbed, "No, not Carlo.") "How little you know men! How little do you reflect how the obligations of the hour should affect a creature deserving life! Do you fancy that Carlo wishes you to be for ever reading the line of a copy-book and shaping your conduct by it? Our Italian girls do this; he despises them. Listen to me; do not I know what is meant by the truth of love? I pass through fire, and keep constant to it; but you have some vile Romance of Chivalry in your head; a modern sculptor's figure, 'MEDITATION;' that is the sort of bride you would give him in the stirring days of Italy. Do you think it is only a statue that can be true? Perceive—will you not—that this Lieutenant Pierson is your enemy. He tells you as much; surely the challenge is fair? Defeat him as you best can. Angelo shall not be abandoned."

"O me! it is unendurable; you are merciless," said Vittoria, shuddering.

She saw the vile figure of herself aping smirks and tender meanings to her old lover. It was a picture that she dared not let her mind rest on; how then

could she personate it? All through her life she had been frank; as a young woman, she was clear of soul; she felt that her simplicity was already soiled by the bare comprehension of the abominable course indicated by Laura. Degradation seemed to have been a thing up to this moment only dreamed of; but now that it was demanded of her to play coquette and trick her womanhood with false allurements, she knew the sentiment of utter ruin; she was ashamed. No word is more lightly spoken than shame. Vittoria's early devotion to her art, and subsequently to her Italy, had carried her through the term when she would otherwise have showed the natural mild attack of the disease. It came on her now in a rush, penetrating every chamber of her heart, overwhelming her; she could see no distinction between being ever so little false and altogether despicable. She had loathings of her body and her life. With grovelling difficulty of speech she endeavoured to convey the sense of her repugnance to Laura, who leaned her ear, wondering at such bluntness of wit in a woman, and said, "Are you quite deficient in the craft of your sex, child? You can, and you will, guard yourself ten times better when your aim is simply to subject him." But this was not reason to a spirit writhing in the serpent-coil of fiery blushes.

Vittoria said, "I shall pity him so."

She meant she would pity Wilfrid in deluding him. It was a taint of the hypocrisy which comes with shame.

The signora retorted: "I can't follow the action of your mind a bit."

Pity being a form of tenderness, Laura supposed that she would intuitively hate the man who compelled her to do what she abhorred.

They spent the greater portion of the night in this debate.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ESCAPE OF ANGELO.

VITTORIA knew better than Laura that the task was easy ; she had but to override her aversion to the show of trifling with a dead passion ; and when she thought of Angelo lying helpless in the swarm of enemies, and that Wilfrid could consent to use his tragic advantage to force her to silly love-play, his selfishness wrought its reflection, so that she became sufficiently unjust to forget her marvellous personal influence over him. Even her tenacious sentiment concerning his white uniform was clouded. She very soon ceased to be shamefaced in her own fancy. At dawn she stood at her window looking across the valley of Meran, and felt the whole scene in a song of her heart, with the faintest recollection of her having passed through a tempest overnight. The warm southern glow of the enfoliated valley recalled her living Italy, and Italy her voice. She grew wake-

fully glad : it was her nature, not her mind, that had twisted in the convulsions of last night's horror of shame. The chirp of healthy blood in full-flowing veins dispersed it ; and as a tropical atmosphere is cleared by the hurricane, she lost her depression and went down among her enemies possessed by an inner delight, that was again of her nature, not of her mind. She took her gladness for a happy sign that she had power to rise buoyant above circumstances ; and though aware that she was getting to see things in harsh outlines, she was unconscious of her haggard imagination.

The Lenkensteins had projected to escape the blandishments of Vienna by residing during the winter in Venice, where Wilfrid and his sister were to be the guests of the countess ;—a pleasant prospect that was dashed out by an official visit from Colonel Zofel of the Meran garrison, through whom it was known that Lieutenant Pierson, while enjoying his full liberty to investigate the charms of the neighbourhood, might not extend his excursions beyond a pedestrian day's limit ;—he was, in fact, under surveillance. The colonel formally exacted his word of honour that he would not attempt to pass the bounds, and explained to the duchess that the injunction was favourable to the lieutenant, as implying that he

must be ready at any moment to receive the order to join his regiment. Wilfrid bowed with a proper soldierly submission. Respecting the criminal whom his men were pursuing, Colonel Zofel said that he was sparing no efforts to come on his traces ; he supposed, from what he had heard in the Ultenthal, that Guidascarpì was on his back somewhere within a short range of Meran. Vittoria strained her ears to the colonel's German ; she fancied his communication to be that he suspected Angelo's presence in Meran.

The official part of his visit being terminated, the colonel addressed some questions to the duchess concerning the night of the famous Fifteenth at La Scala. He was an amateur, and spoke with enthusiasm of the reports of the new prima donna. The duchess perceived that he was asking for an introduction to the heroine of the night, and graciously said that perhaps that very prima donna would make amends to him for his absence on the occasion. Vittoria checked a movement of revolt in her frame. She cast an involuntary look at Wilfrid. "Now it begins," she thought, and went to the piano: she had previously refused to sing. Wilfrid had to bend his head over his betrothed and listen to her whisperings. He did so, carelessly swaying his hand to the measure of the aria, with an increasing bitter comparison of

the two voices. Lena persisted in talking; she was indignant at his abandonment of the journey to Venice; she reproached him as feeble, inconsiderate, indifferent. Then for an instant she would pause to hear the voice, and renew her assault. "We ought to be thankful that she is not singing a song of death and destruction to us! The archduchess is coming to Venice. If you are presented to her and please her, and get the writs of naturalisation prepared, you will be one of us completely, and your fortune is made. If you stay here—why should you stay? It is nothing but your uncle's caprice. I am too angry to care for music. If you stay, you will earn my contempt. I will not be buried another week in such a place. I am tired of weeping. We all go to Venice: Captain Weisspriess follows us. We are to have endless balls, an opera, a court there—with whom am I to dance, pray, when I am out of mourning? Am I to sit and govern my feet under a chair, and gaze like an imbecile nun? It is too preposterous. I am betrothed to you; I wish, I *wish* to behave like a betrothed. The archduchess herself will laugh to see me chained to a chair. I shall have to reply a thousand times to 'Where is he?' What can I answer? '*Wouldn't* come,' will be the only true reply."

During this tirade, Vittoria was singing one of her old songs, well known to Wilfrid, which brought the vision of a foaming weir, and moonlight between the branches of a great cedar-tree, and the lost love of his heart sitting by his side in the noising stillness. He was sure that she could be singing it for no one but for him. The leap taken by his spirit from this time to that, was shorter than from the past back to the present.

"You do not applaud," said Lena, when the song had ceased.

He murmured: "I never do, in drawing-rooms."

"A cantatrice expects it everywhere; these creatures live on it."

"I'll tell her, if you like, what *we* thought of it, when I take her down to my sister, presently."

"Are you not to take *me* down?"

"The etiquette is to hand her up to you."

"No, no!" Lena insisted, in abhorrence of etiquette; but Wilfrid said pointedly that his sister's feelings must be spared. "Her husband is an animal: he is a millionaire city-of-London merchant; conceive him! He has drunk himself gouty on port wine, and here he is for the grape-cure."

"Ah! in that England of yours, women marry for wealth," said Lena.

"Yes, in your Austria they have a better motive," he interpreted her sentiment.

"Say, in our Austria."

"In our Austria, certainly."

"And with our holy religion?"

"It is not yet mine."

"It will be?" She put the question eagerly.

Wilfrid hesitated, and by his adept hesitation succeeded in throwing her off the jealous scent.

"Say that it will be, my Wilfrid!"

"You must give me time."

"This subject always makes you cold."

"My own Lena!"

"Can I be, if we are doomed to be parted when we die?"

There is small space for compunction in a man's heart when he is in Wilfrid's state, burning with the revival of what seemed to him a superhuman attachment. He had no design to break his acknowledged bondage to Countess Lena, and answered her tender speech almost as tenderly.

It never occurred to him, as he was walking down to Meran with Vittoria, that she could suppose him to be bartering to help rescue the life of a wretched man in return for soft confidential looks of entreaty; nor did he reflect that, when cast on him, they might

mean no more than the wish to move him for a charitable purpose. The completeness of her fascination was shown by his reading her entirely by his own emotions, so that a lowly-uttered word, or a wavering unwilling glance, made him think that she was subdued by the charm of the old days.

"Is it here?" she said, stopping under the first Italian name she saw in the arcade of shops.

"How on earth have you guessed it?" he asked, astonished.

She told him to wait at the end of the arcade, and passed in. When she joined him again, she was downcast. They went straight to Adela's hotel, where the one thing which gave her animation was the hearing that Mr. Sedley had met an English doctor there, and had placed himself in his hands. Adela dressed splendidly for her presentation to the duchess. Having done so, she noticed Vittoria's depressed countenance and difficult breathing. She commanded her to see the doctor. Vittoria consented, and made use of him. She could tell Laura confidently at night that Wilfrid would not betray Angelo, though she had not spoken one direct word to him on the subject.

Wilfrid was peculiarly adept in the idle game he played. One who is intent upon an evil end is open

to expose his plan. But he had none in view ; he lived for the luxurious sensation of being near the woman who fascinated him, and who was now positively abashed when by his side. Adela suggested to him faintly—she believed it was her spontaneous idea—that he might be making his countess jealous. He assured her that the fancy sprang from scenes which she remembered, and that she could have no idea of the pride of a highborn Austrian girl, who was incapable of conceiving jealousy of a person below her class. Adela replied that it was not his manner so much as Emilia's which might arouse the suspicion ; but she immediately affected to appreciate the sentiments of a highborn Austrian girl towards a cantatrice, whose gifts we regard simply as an aristocratic entertainment. Wilfrid induced his sisters to relate Vittoria's early history to Countess Lena ; and himself almost wondered, when he heard it in bare words, at that haunting vision of the glory of Vittoria at La Scala—where, as he remembered, he would have run against destruction to cling to her lips. Adela was at first alarmed by the concentrated wrathfulness which she discovered in the bosom of Countess Anna, who, as their intimacy waxed, spoke of the intruding opera siren in terms hardly proper even to married women ; but it seemed right, as

being possibly aristocratic. Lena was much more tolerant. "I have just the same enthusiasm for soldiers that my Wilfrid has for singers," she said; and it afforded Adela exquisite pleasure to hear her tell how that she had originally heard of the 'eccentric young Englishman,' General Pierson's nephew, as a *Lustspiel*—a comedy; and of his feats on horseback, and his duels, and his—"he *was* very wicked over here, you know;" Lena laughed. She assumed the privileges of her four-and-twenty years and her rank. Her marriage was to take place in the spring. She announced it with the simplicity of an independent woman of the world, adding, "That is, if my Wilfrid will oblige me by not plunging into further disgrace with the general."

"No; you will not marry a man who is under a cloud," Anna subjoined.

"Certainly not a soldier," said Lena. "What it was exactly that he did at La Scala, I don't know, and don't care to know, but he was then ignorant that she had touched the hand of that Guidascarpi. I decide by this—he was valiant; he defied everybody: therefore, *I* forgive him. He is not in disgrace with *me*. I will reinstate him."

"You have your own way of being romantic," said

Anna. "A soldier who forgets his duty is in my opinion only a brave fool."

"It seems to me that a great many gallant officers are fond of fine voices," Lena retorted.

"No doubt it is a fashion among them," said Anna.

Adela recoiled with astonishment when she began to see the light in which the sisters regarded Vittoria; and she was loyal enough to hint and protest on her friend's behalf. The sisters called her a very good soul. "It may not be in England as over here," said Anna. "We have to submit to these little social scourges."

Lena whispered to Adela, "An angry woman will think the worst. I have no doubt of my Wilfrid. If I had!" Her eyes flashed. Fire was not wanting in her.

The difficulties which tasked the amiable duchess to preserve an outward show of peace among the antagonistic elements she gathered together were increased by the arrival at the castle of Count Lenkenstein, Bianca's husband, and head of the family, from Bologna. He was a tall and courtly man, who had one face for his friends and another for the reverse party; which is to say that his manners could be bad. Count Lenkenstein was accompanied by Count Serabiglione, who brought

Laura's children with their Roman nurse, Assunta. Laura kissed her little ones, and sent them out of her sight. Vittoria found her home in their play and prattle. She needed a refuge, for Count Lenkenstein was singularly brutal in his bearing towards her. He let her know that he had come to Meran to superintend the hunt for the assassin, Angelo Guidascarpi. He attempted to exact her promise in precise speech that she would be on the spot to testify against Angelo when that foul villain should be caught. He objected openly to Laura's children going about with her. Bitter talk on every starting subject was exchanged across the duchess's table. She herself was in disgrace on Laura's account, and had to practise an overflowing sweetness, with no one to second her efforts. The two noblemen spoke in accord on the bubble revolution. The strong hand—ay, the strong hand! The strong hand disposes of vermin. Laura listened to them, pallid with silent torture. “Since the rascals have taken to assassination, we know that we have them at the dregs,” said Count Lenkenstein. “A cord round the throats of a few scores of them, and the country will learn the virtue of docility.”

Laura whispered to her sister: “Have you espoused a hangman?”

Such dropping of deadly shells in a quiet society went near to scattering it violently; but the union was necessitous. Count Lenkenstein desired to confront Vittoria and Angelo; Laura would not quit her side, and Amalia would not expel her friend. Count Lenkenstein complained roughly of Laura's conduct; nor did Laura escape her father's reproof. "Sir, you are privileged to say what you will to me," she responded, with the humility which exasperated him.

"Yes, you bend, you bend, that you may be stiff-necked when it suits you," he snapped her short.

"Surely that is the text of the sermon you preach to our Italy!"

"A little more, as you are running on now, madame, and 'our Italy' will be froth on the lips. You see, she is ruined."

"Chi le fa, le sa," hummed Laura; "but I would avoid quoting you as that authority."

"After your last miserable fiasco, my dear!"

"It was another of our school exercises. We had not been good boys and girls. We had learnt our lesson imperfectly. We have received our punishment, and we mean to do better next time."

"Behave seasonably, fittingly; be less of a wasp; school your tongue."

"Bianca is a pattern to me, I am aware," said Laura.

"She is a good wife."

"I am a poor widow."

"She is a good daughter."

"I am a wicked rebel."

"And you are scheming at something *now*," said the little nobleman, sagacious so far; but he was too eager to read the verification of the tentative remark in her face, and she perceived that it was a guess founded on her show of spirit.

"Scheming to contain my temper, which is much tried," she said. "But I suppose it supports me. I can always keep up against hostility."

"You provoke it; you provoke it."

"My instinct, then, divines my medicine."

"Exactly, my dear; your personal instinct. That instigates you all. And none are so easily conciliated as these Austrians. Conciliate them, and you have them." Count Serabiglione diverged into a repetition of his theory of the policy and mission of superior intelligences, as regarded his system for dealing with the Austrians.

Nurse Assunta's jealousy was worked upon to separate the children from Vittoria. They ran down with her no more to meet the vast bowls of grapes in

the morning and feather their hats with vine leaves. Deprived of her darlings, the tonelessness of her days made her look to Wilfrid for commiseration. Father Bernardus was too continually exhortative, and fenced too much to "hit the eyeball of her conscience," as he phrased it, to afford her repose. Wilfrid could tell himself that he had already done much for her; for if what he had done were known, his career, social and military, was ended. This idea being accompanied by a sense of security delighted him; he was accustomed to inquire of Angelo's condition, and praise the British doctor who was attending him gratuitously. "I wish I could get him out of the way," he said, and frowned as in a mental struggle. Vittoria heard him repeat his "I wish!" It heightened greatly her conception of the sacrifice he would be making on her behalf and charity's. She spoke with a reverential tenderness, such as it was hard to suppose a woman capable of addressing to other than the man who moved her soul. The words she uttered were pure thanks; it was the tone which sent them winged and shaking seed. She had spoken partly to prompt his activity, but her self-respect had been sustained by his avoidance of the dreaded old themes, and that grateful feeling made her voice musically rich.

"I dare not go to him, but the doctor tells me the fever has left him, Wilfrid ; his wounds are healing ; but he is bandaged from head to foot. The sword pierced his side twice, and his arms and hands are cut horribly. He cannot yet walk. If he is discovered, he is lost. Count Lenkenstein has declared that he will stay at the castle till he has him his prisoner. The soldiers are all round us. They know that Angelo is in the ring. They have traced him all over from the Valtellina to this Ultenthal, and only cannot guess that he is in the lion's jaw. I rise in the morning, thinking, 'Is this to be the black day ?' He is sure to be caught."

"If I could hit on a plan," said Wilfrid, figuring as though he had a diorama of impossible schemes revolving before his eyes.

"I could believe in the actual whispering of an angel if you did. It was to guard me that Angelo put himself in peril."

"Then," said Wilfrid, "I am his debtor. I owe him as much as my life is worth."

"Think, think," she urged ; and promised affection, devotion, veneration, all sorts of vague things, that were too like his own sentiments to prompt him pointedly. Yet he so pledged himself to her by word, and prepared his own mind to conceive the act of service,

that (as he did not reflect) circumstance might at any moment plunge him into a gulf. Conduct of this sort is a challenge sure to be answered.

One morning Vittoria was gladdened by a letter from Rocco Ricci, who had fled to Turin. He told her that the king had promised to give her a warm welcome in his capital, where her name was famous. She consulted with Laura, and they resolved to go as soon as Angelo could stand on his feet. Turin was cold Italy, but it was Italy; and from Turin the Italian army was to flow, like the Mincio from the Garda lake. "And there, too, is a stage," Vittoria thought, in a suddenly revived thirst for the stage and a field for work. She determined to run down to Meran and see Angelo. Laura walked a little way with her, till Wilfrid, alert for these occasions, joined them. On the commencement of the zig-zag below, there were soldiers, the sight of whom was not confusing. Military messengers frequently came up to the castle where Count Lenkenstein, assisted by Count Serabiglione, examined their depositions, the Italian in the manner of a winding lawyer, the German of a gruff judge. Half way down the zig-zag, Vittoria cast a preconcerted signal back to Laura. The soldiers had a pair of prisoners between their ranks; Vittoria recognised the men who had carried Captain

Weisspriess from the ground where the duel was fought. A quick divination told her that they held Angelo's life on their tongues. They must have found him in the mountain-pass while hurrying to their homes, and it was they who had led him to Meran. On the Passeyr bridge, she turned and said to Wilfrid, "Help me now. Send instantly the doctor in a carriage to the place where he is lying."

Wilfrid was intent on her flushed beauty and the half-compressed quiver of her lip.

She quitted him and hurried to Angelo. Her joy broke out in a cry of thankfulness at sight of Angelo; he had risen from his bed; he could stand, and he smiled.

"That Jacopo is just now the nearest link to me," he said, when she related her having seen the two men guarded by soldiers; he felt helpless, and spoke in resignation. She followed his eye about the room till it rested on the stilet. This she handed to him. "If they think of having me alive!" he said, softly. The Italian and his wife who had given him shelter and nursed him came in, and approved his going, though they did not complain of what they might chance to have incurred. He offered them his purse and they took it. Minutes of grievous expectation went by; Vittoria could endure them no longer; she

ran out to the hotel, near which, in the shade of a poplar, Wilfrid was smoking quietly. He informed her that his sister and the doctor had driven out to meet Captain Gambier; his brother-in-law was alone upstairs. Her look of amazement touched him more shrewdly than scorn, and he said, "What on earth can I do?"

"Order out a carriage. Send your brother-in-law in it. If you tell him 'for your health,' he will go."

"On my honour, I don't know where those three words would not send him," said Wilfrid; but he did not move, and was for protesting that he really could not guess what was the matter, and the ground for all this urgency.

Vittoria compelled her angry lips to speak out her suspicions explicitly, whereupon he glanced at the sun-glare in a meditation, occasionally blinking his eyes. She thought, "Oh, Heaven! can he be waiting for me to coax him?" It was the truth, though it would have been strange to him to have heard it. She grew sure that it was the truth; never had she despised living creature so utterly as when she murmured, "My best friend! my brother! my noble Wilfrid! my old beloved! help me now, without loss of a minute."

It caused his breath to come and go unevenly.

“Repeat that—once, only once,” he said.

She looked at him with the sorrowful earnestness which, since its meaning was shut from him, was as sweet.

“You will repeat it by-and-by?—another time? Trust me to do my utmost. *Old* beloved! What is the meaning of ‘old beloved’? One word in explanation. If it means anything, I would die for you! Emilia, do you hear?—die for you! To me you are nothing old or bygone, whatever I may be to you. To me—yes, I will order the carriage—you are the Emilia—listen! listen! Ah! you have shut your ears against me. I am bound in all seeming, but I—you drive me mad; you know your power. Speak one word, that I may feel—that I may be convinced . . . or not a single word; I will obey you without. I have said that you command my life.”

In a block of carriages on the bridge, Vittoria perceived a lifted hand. It was Laura’s; Beppo was in attendance on her. Laura drove up and said: “You guessed right; where is he?” The communications between them were more indicated than spoken. Beppo had heard Jacopo confess to his having conducted a wounded Italian gentleman into Meran. “That means that the houses will be searched within an hour,” said Laura; “my brother-

in-law Bear is radiant." She mimicked the Lenkenstein physiognomy spontaneously in the run of her speech. "If Angelo can help himself ever so little, he has a fair start." A look was cast on Wilfrid; Vittoria nodded; Wilfrid was entrapped.

"Englishmen we can trust," said Laura, and requested him to step into her carriage. He glanced round the open space. Beppo did the same, and beheld the chasseur Jacob Baumwalder Feckelwitz crossing the bridge on foot, but he said nothing. Wilfrid was on the step of the carriage, for what positive object neither he nor the others knew, when his sister and the doctor joined them. Captain Gambier was still missing.

"He would have done anything for us," Vittoria said in Wilfrid's hearing.

"Tell us what plan you have," the latter replied fretfully.

She whispered: "Persuade Adela to make her husband drive out. The doctor will go too, and Beppo. They shall take Angelo. Our carriage will follow empty, and bring Mr. Sedley back."

Wilfrid cast his eyes up in the air, at the monstrous impudence of the project. "A storm is coming on," he suggested, to divert her reading of his grimace; but she was speaking to the doctor, who answered

her readily aloud: "If you are certain of what you say." The remark incited Wilfrid to be no subordinate in devotion; handing Adela from the carriage, while the doctor ran up to Mr. Sedley, he drew her away. Laura and Vittoria watched the motion of their eyes and lips.

"Will he tell her the purpose?" said Laura.

Vittoria smiled nervously: "He is fibbing."

Marking the energy expended by Wilfred in this art, the wiser woman said: "Be on your guard the next two minutes he gets you alone."

"You see his devotion."

"Does he see his compensation? But he must help us at any hazard."

Adela broke away from her brother twice, and each time he fixed her to the spot more imperiously. At last she ran into the hotel; she was crying. "A bad economy of tears," said Laura, commenting on the dumb scene, to soothe her savage impatience. "In another twenty minutes we shall have the city gates locked."

They heard a window thrown up; Mr. Sedley's head came out, and peered at the sky. Wilfrid said to Vittoria: "I can do nothing beyond what I have done, I fear."

She thought it was a petition for thanks, but Laura

knew better ; she said : “ I see Count Lenkenstein on his way to the barracks.”

Wilfrid bowed : “ I may be able to serve you in that quarter.”

He retired ; whereupon Laura inquired how her friend could reasonably suppose that a man would ever endure being thanked in public.

“ I shall never understand and never care to understand them,” said Vittoria.

“ It is a knowledge that is forced on us, my dear. May Heaven make the minds of our enemies stupid for the next five hours !—Apropos of what I was saying, women and men are in two hostile camps. We have a sort of general armistice and everlasting strife of individuals—Ah !” she clapped hands on her knees, “ here comes your doctor ; I could fancy I see a pointed light on his head. Men of science, my Sandra, are always the humanest.”

The chill air of a wind preceding thunder was driving round the head of the vale, and Mr. Sedley, wrapped in furs, and feebly remonstrating with his medical adviser, stepped into his carriage. The doctor followed him, giving a grave recognition of Vittoria’s gaze. Both gentlemen raised their hats to the ladies, who alighted as soon as they had gone in the direction of the Vintschgau road.

“One has only to furnish you with money, my Beppo,” said Vittoria, complimenting his quick apprehensiveness. “Buy bread and cakes at one of the shops, and buy wine. You will find me where you can, when you have seen him safe. I have no idea of where my home will be. Perhaps England.”

“Italy, Italy! faint heart,” said Laura.

Furnished with money, Beppo rolled away gaily.

The doubt was in Laura whether an Englishman’s wits were to be relied on in such an emergency; but she admitted that the doctor had looked full enough of serious meaning, and that the Englishman named Merthyr Powys was keen and ready. They sat a long half-hour, that thumped itself out like an alarm-bell, under the poplars, by the clamouring Passeyr, watching the roll and spring of the waters, and the radiant foam, while band-music played to a great company of visitors, and sounds of thunder drew near. Over the mountains above the Adige, the leaden fingers of an advance of the thunder-cloud pushed slowly, and on a sudden a mighty gale sat heaped black on the mountain-top and blew. Down went the heads of the poplars, the river staggered in its leap, the vale was shuddering grey. It was like the transformation in a fairy tale; Beauty had

taken her old cloak about her, and bent to calamity. The poplars streamed their length sideways, and in the pauses of the strenuous wind nodded and dashed wildly and white over the dead black water, that waxed in foam and hissed, showing its teeth like a beast enraged. Laura and Vittoria joined hands and struggled for shelter. The tent of a travelling circus from the South, newly pitched on a grass-plot near the river, was caught up and whirled in the air and flung in the face of a marching guard of soldiery, whom it swathed and bore sheer to earth, while on them and around them a line of poplars fell flat, the wind whistling over them. Laura directed Vittoria's eyes to the sight. "See," she said, and her face was set hard with cold and excitement, so that she looked a witch in the uproar; "would you not say the devil is loose now Angelo is abroad?" Thunder and lightning possessed the vale, and then a vertical rain. At the first gleam of sunlight, Laura and Vittoria walked up to the Laubengasse—the street of the arcades, where they made purchases of numerous needless articles, not daring to enter the Italian's shop. A woman at a fruit-stall opposite to it told them that no carriage could have driven up there. During their great perplexity, mud and rain stained

soldiers, the same whom they had seen borne to earth by the flying curtain, marched before the shop ; the shop and the house were searched ; the Italian and his old limping wife were carried away.

“ Tell me now, that storm was not Angelo’s friend,” Laura muttered.

“ Can he have escaped ? ” said Vittoria.

“ He is ‘ on horseback. ’ ” Laura quoted the Italian proverb to signify that he had flown ; how, she could not say, and none could inform her. The joy of their hearts rose in one fountain.

“ I shall feel better blood in my body from this moment,” Laura said ; and Vittoria, “ Oh ! we can be strong, if we only resolve.”

“ You want to sing ? ”

“ I do.”

“ I shall find pleasure in your voice now.”

“ The wicked voice ! ”

“ Yes, the very wicked voice ! But I shall be glad to hear it, You can sing to-night, and drown those Lenkensteins.”

“ If my Carlo could hear me ! ”

“ Ah ! ” sighed the signora, musing. “ *He* is in prison now. I remember him the dearest little lad fencing with my husband for exercise after they had been writing all day. When Giacomo was imprisoned,

Carlo sat outside the prison walls till it was time for him to enter ; his chin and upper lip were smooth as a girl's. Giacomo said to him, 'May you always have the power of going out, or not have a wife waiting for you.' Here they come." (She spoke of tears.) "It's because I am joyful. The channel for them has grown so dry that they prick and sting. Oh, Sandra! it would be pleasant to me if we might both be buried for seven days, and have one long howl of weakness together. A little bite of satisfaction makes me so tired. I believe there's something very bad for us in our always being at war, and never, never gaining ground. Just one spark of triumph intoxicates us. Look at all those people pouring out again. They are the children of fair weather. I hope the state of their health does not trouble them too much. Vienna sends consumptive patients here. If you regard them attentively, you will observe that they have an anxious ear. Their constitutions are not sound ; they fear they may die."

Laura's irony was unforced ; it was no more than a subtle discord naturally struck from the scene by a soul in contrast with it.

They beheld the riding forth of troopers and a knot of officers hotly conversing together. At another

point the duchess and the Lenkenstein ladies, Count Lenkenstein, Count Serabiglione, and Wilfrid paced up and down, waiting for music. Laura left the public places and crossed an upper bridge over the Passeyr, near the castle, by which route she skirted vines and dropped over sloping meadows to some shaded boulders where the Passeyr found a sandy bay, and leaped in transparent green, and whitened and swung twisting in a long smooth body down a narrow chasm, and noised below. The thundering torrent stilled their sensations; and the water, making battle against great blocks of porphyry and granite, caught their thoughts. So strong was the impression of it on Vittoria's mind, that for hours after, every image she conceived seemed proper to the inrush and outpour; the elbowing, the tossing, the foaming, the burst on stones, and silvery bubbles under and silvery canopy above, the chattering and huzzaing; all working on towards the one-toned fall under the rainbow on the castle-rock.

Next day, the chasseur Jacob Baumwalder Feckelwitz deposed in full company at Sonnenberg, that, obeying Count Serabiglione's instructions, he had gone down to the city, and had there seen Lieutenant Pierson with the ladies in front of the hotel; he had followed the English carriage, which took up a man

who was standing ready on crutches at the corner of the Laubengasse, and drove rapidly out of the north-western gate, leading to Schlanders and Mals and the Engadine. He had witnessed the transfer of the crippled man from one carriage to another, and had raised shouts and given hue-and-cry, but the intervention of the storm had stopped his pursuit.

He was proceeding to say what his suppositions were. Count Lenkenstein lifted his finger for Wilfrid to follow him out of the room. Count Serabiglione went at their heels. Then Count Lenkenstein sent for his wife, whom Anna and Lena accompanied.

"How many persons are you going to ruin in the course of your crusade, my dear?" the duchess said to Laura.

"Dearest, I am penitent when I succeed," said Laura.

"If that young man has been assisting you, he is irretrievably ruined."

"I am truly sorry for him."

"As for me, the lectures I shall get in Vienna are terrible to think of. This is the consequence of being the friend of both parties, and a peace-maker."

Count Serabiglione returned alone from the scene at the examination, rubbing his hands and nodding

affably to his daughter. He maliciously declined to gratify the monster of feminine curiosity in the lump, and doled out the scene piecemeal. He might state, he observed, that it was he who had lured Beppo to listen at the door during the examination of the prisoners; and who had then planted a spy on him—following the dictation of precepts exceedingly old. “We are generally beaten, duchess; I admit it; and yet we generally contrive to show the brains. As I say, wed brains to brute force!—but my Laura prefers to bring about a contest instead of an union, so that somebody is certain to be struck, and”—the count spread out his arms and bowed his head—“deserves the blow.” He informed them that Count Lenkenstein had ordered Lieutenant Pierson down to Meran, and that the lieutenant might expect to be cashiered within five days. “What does it matter?” he addressed Vittoria. “It is but a shuffling of victims; Lieutenant Pierson in the place of Guidascarpi! I do not object.”

Count Lenkenstein withdrew his wife and sisters from Sonnenberg instantly. He sent an angry message of adieu to the duchess, informing her that he alone was responsible for the behaviour of the ladies of his family. The poor duchess wept. “This means that I shall be summoned to Vienna for a scolding,

and have to meet my husband," she said to Laura, who permitted herself to be fondled, and barely veiled her exultation in her apology for the mischief she had done. An hour after the departure of the Lenkensteins, the castle was again officially visited by Colonel Zofel. Vittoria and Laura received an order to quit the district of Meran before sunset. The two firebrands dropped no tears. "I really *am* sorry for others when I succeed," said Laura, trying to look sad upon her friend.

"No ; the heart is eaten out of you both by excitement," said the duchess.

Her tender parting, "Love me," in the ear of Vittoria, melted one heart of the two.

Count Serabiglione continued to be buoyed up by his own and his daughter's recent display of a superior intellectual dexterity until the carriage was at the door and Laura presented her cheek to him. He said, "You will know me a wise man when I am off the table." His gesticulations expressed "Ruin, headlong ruin!" He asked her how she could expect him to be for ever repairing her follies. He was going to Vienna ; how could he dare to mention her name there? Not even in a trifle would she consent to be subordinate to authority. Laura checked her replies—the surrendering of a noble Italian life

to the Austrians was such a trifle! She begged only that a poor wanderer might depart with her father's blessing. The count refused to give it; he waved her off in a fury of reproof; and so got smoothly over the fatal moment when money, or the promise of money, is commonly extracted from parental sources, as Laura explained his odd behaviour to her companion. The carriage-door being closed, he regained his courtly composure; his fury was displaced by a chiding finger, which he presently kissed. Father Bernardus was on the steps beside the duchess, and his blessing had not been withheld from Vittoria, though he half confessed to her that she was a mystery in his mind, and would always be one.

"He can understand robust hostility," Laura said, when Vittoria recalled the look of his benevolent forehead and drooping eyelids; "but robust ductility does astonish him. He has not meddled with me; yet I am the one of the two who would be fair prey for an enterprising spiritual father, as the destined man of heaven will find out some day."

She bent and smote her lap. "How little they know us, my darling! They take fever for strength, and calmness for submission. Here is the world before us, and I feel that such a man, were he to pounce on me now, might snap me up and lock me

in a praying-box with small difficulty. And I am the inveterate rebel! What is it nourishes you and keeps you always aiming straight when you are alone? Once in Turin, I shall feel that I am myself. Out of Italy I have a terrible craving for peace. It seems here as if I must lean down to him, my beloved, who has left me."

Vittoria was in alarm lest Wilfrid should accost her while she drove from gate to gate of the city. They passed under the archway of the gate leading up to Schloss Tyrol, and along the road bordered by vines. An old peasant woman stopped them with the signal of a letter in her hand. "Here it is," said Laura, and Vittoria could not help smiling at her shrewd anticipation of it.

"May I follow?"

Nothing more than that was written.

But the bearer of the missive had been provided with a lead pencil to obtain the immediate reply.

"An admirable piece of foresight!" Laura's honest exclamation burst forth.

Vittoria had to look in Laura's face before she could gather her will to do the cruel thing which was least cruel. She wrote firmly:

"Never follow me."

CHAPTER XXIX.

EPISODES OF THE REVOLT AND THE WAR.

THE TOBACCO-RIOTS—RINALDO GUIDASCARPI.

ANNA VON LENKENSTEIN was one who could wait for vengeance. Lena punished on the spot, and punished herself most. She broke off her engagement with Wilfrid, while at the same time she caused a secret message to be conveyed to him, telling him that the prolongation of his residence in Meran would restore him to his position in the army.

Wilfrid remained at Meran till the last days of December.

It was winter in Milan, turning to the new year—the year of flames for continental Europe. A young man with a military stride, but out of uniform, had stepped from a travelling carriage and entered a cigar-shop. Upon calling for cigars, he was surprised to observe the woman who was serving there keep

her arms under her apron. She cast a look into the street, where a crowd of boys and one or two lean men had gathered about the door. After some delay, she entreated her customer to let her pluck his cloak half-way over the counter; at the same time she thrust a cigar-box under that concealment, together with a printed song in the Milanese dialect. He lifted the paper to read it, and found it tough as Russ. She translated some of the more salient couplets. Tobacco had become a dead business, she said, now that the popular edict had gone forth against 'smoking gold into the pockets of the Tedeschi.' None smoked except officers and Englishmen.

"I am an Englishman," he said.

"And not an officer?" she asked; but he gave no answer. "Englishmen are rare in winter, and don't like being mobbed," said the woman.

Nodding to her urgent petition, he deferred the lighting of his cigar. The vetturino requested him to jump up quickly, and a howl of "No smoking in Milan—fuori!—down with tobacco-smokers!" beset the carriage. He tossed half-a-dozen cigars on the pavement derisively. They were scrambled for as when a pack of wolves are diverted by a garment dropped from the flying sledge, but the unluckier

hands came after his heels in fuller howl. He noticed the singular appearance of the streets. Bands of the scum of the population hung at various points: from time to time a shout was raised at a distance, "Abasso il zigarro!" and "Away with the cigar!" went an organized file-firing of cries along the open place. Several gentlemen were mobbed, and compelled to fling the cigars from their teeth. He saw the polizia in twos and threes taking counsel and shrugging, evidently too anxious to avoid a collision. Austrian soldiers and subalterns alone smoked freely; they puffed the harder when the yells and hootings and whistlings thickened at their heels. Sometimes they walked on at their own pace; or, when the noise swelled to a crisis, turned and stood fast, making an exhibition of curling smoke, as a mute form of contempt. Then commenced hustlings and a tremendous uproar; sabres were drawn, the whitecoats planted themselves back to back. Milan was clearly in a condition of raging disease. The soldiery not only accepted the challenge of the mob, but assumed the offensive. Here and there they were seen crossing the street to puff obnoxiously in the faces of people. Numerous subalterns were abroad, lively for strife, and bright with the signal of their readiness. An icy wind blew down from the Alps, whitening the house-

tops and the ways, but every street, corso, and piazza was dense with loungers, as on a summer evening ; the clamour of a skirmish anywhere attracted streams of disciplined rioters on all sides ; it was the holiday of rascals.

Our traveller had ordered his vetturino to drive slowly towards his hotel, that he might take the features of this novel scene. He soon showed his view of the case by putting an unlighted cigar in his mouth. The vetturino noted that his conveyance acted as a kindling-match to awaken cries in quiet quarters, looked round, and grinned savagely at the sight of the cigar.

“ Drop it, or I drop you,” he said ; and hearing the command to drive on, pulled up short.

They were in a narrow way leading to the Piazza de’ Mercanti. While the altercation was going on between them, a great push of men emerged from one of the close courts some dozen paces ahead of the horse, bearing forth a single young officer in their midst.

“ Signore, would you like to be the froth of a boiling of that sort ? ” The vetturino seized the image at once to strike home his instance of the danger of outraging the will of the people.

Our traveller immediately unlocked a case that

lay on the seat in front of him, and drew out a steel scabbard, from which he plucked the sword, and straightway leaped to the ground. The officer's cigar had been dashed from his mouth: he stood at bay, sword in hand, meeting a rush with a desperate stroke. The assistance of a second sword got him clear of the fray. Both hastened forward as the crush melted with the hiss of a withdrawing wave. They interchanged exclamations:—

“Is it you, Jenna!”

“In the devil's name, Pierson, have you come to keep your appointment in mid-winter?”

“Come on: I'll stick beside you.”

“On, then!”

They glanced behind them, heeding little the tail of ruffians whom they had silenced.

“We shall have plenty of fighting soon, so we'll smoke a cordial cigar together,” said Lieutenant Jenna, and at once struck a light and blazed defiance to Milan afresh—an example that was necessarily followed by his comrade. “What has happened to you, Pierson? Of course, I knew you were ready for our bit of play—though you'll hear what I said of you. How the deuce could you think of running off with that opera girl, and getting a fellow in the mountains to stab our merry old Weisspriess, just because you

fancied he was going to slip a word or so over the back of his hand in Countess Lena's ear? No wonder she's shy of you now."

"So, that's the tale afloat," said Wilfrid. "Come to my hotel and dine with me. I suppose that cur has driven my luggage there."

Jenna informed him that officers had to muster in barracks every evening.

"Come and see your old comrades; they'll like you better in bad luck—there's the comfort of it: hang the human nature! She's a good old brute, if you don't drive her hard. Our regiment left Verona in November. There we had tolerable cookery; come and take the best we can give you."

But this invitation Wilfrid had to decline.

"Why?" said Jenna.

He replied: "I've stuck at Meran three months. I did it in obedience to what I understood from Colonel Zofel to be the general's orders. When I was as perfectly dry as a baked Egyptian, I determined to believe that I was not only in disgrace, but dismissed the service. I posted to Botzen and Riva, on to Milan; and here I am. The least I can do is to show myself here."

"Very well, then, come and show yourself at our table," said Jenna. "Listen: we'll make a furious

row after supper, and get hauled in by the collar before the general. You can swear you have never been absent from duty: swear the general never gave you forcible furlough. I'll swear it; all our fellows will swear it. The general will say, 'Oh! a very big lie's equal to a truth; big brother to a fact,' or something; as he always does, you know. Face it out. We can't spare a good stout sword in these times. On with me, my Pierson."

"I would," said Wilfrid, doubtfully.

A douse of water from a window extinguished their cigars.

Lieutenant Jenna wiped his face deliberately, and lighting another cigar, remarked—"This is the fifth poor devil who has come to an untimely end within an hour. It is brisk work. Now, I'll swear I'll smoke *this* one out."

The cigar was scattered in sparks from his lips by a hat skilfully flung. He picked it up miry and cleaned it, observing that his honour was pledged to this fellow. The hat he trampled into a muddy lump. Wilfrid found it impossible to ape his coolness. He swung about for an adversary. Jenna pulled him on.

"A salute from a window," he said. "We can't

storm the houses. The time'll come for it—and then, you cats!”

Wilfrid inquired how long this state of things had been going on. Jenna replied that they appeared to be in the middle of it;—nearly a week. Another week, and their day would arrive; and then!

“Have you heard anything of a Count Ammiani here?” said Wilfrid.

“Oh! he’s one of the lot, I believe. We have him fast, as we’ll have the bundle of them. Keep eye on those dogs behind us, and manœuvre your cigar. The plan is, to give half-a-dozen bright puffs, and then keep it in your fist; and when you see an Italian head, volcano him like fury. Yes, I’ve heard of that Ammiani. The scoundrels made an attempt to get him out of prison—I fancy he’s in the city prison—last Friday night. I don’t know exactly where he is; but it’s pretty fair reckoning to say that he’ll enjoy a large slice of the next year in the charming solitude of Spielberg, if Milan is restless. Is he a friend of yours?”

“Not by any means,” said Wilfrid.

“Mio prigione!” Jenna mouthed with ineffable contemptuousness; “he’ll have time to write his memoirs, as one of the dogs did. I remember my mother crying over the book. *I* read it? Not I!

I never read books. My father said—the stout old colonel—‘Prison seems to make these Italians take an interest in themselves.’ ‘Oh!’ says my mother, ‘why can’t they be at peace with us?’ ‘That’s exactly the question,’ says my father, ‘we’re always putting to them.’ And so I say. Why can’t they let us smoke our cigars in peace?”

Jenna finished by assaulting a herd of faces with smoke.

“Pig of a German!” was shouted; and “Porco-porco” was sung in a scale of voices. Jenna received a blinding slap across the eyes. He staggered back; Wilfrid slashed his sword in defence of him. He struck a man down. “Blood! blood!” cried the gathering mob, and gave space, but hedged the couple thickly. Windows were thrown up; forth came a rain of household projectiles. The cry of “Blood! blood!” was repeated by numbers pouring on them from the issues to right and left. It is a terrible cry in a city. In a city of the south it rouses the wild beast in men to madness. Jenna smoked triumphantly and blew great clouds, with an eye aloft for the stools, basins, chairs, and water descending. They were in the middle of one of the close streets of old Milan. The man felled by Wilfrid was raised on strong arms, that his bleeding head might

be seen of all, and a dreadful hum went round. A fire of missiles, stones, balls of wax, lumps of dirt, sticks of broken chairs, began to play. Wilfrid had a sudden gleam of the face of his Verona assailant. He and Jenna called "Follow me," in one breath, and drove forward with sword-points, which they dashed at the foremost; by dint of swift semi-circlings of the edges they got through, but a mighty voice of command thundered; the rearward portion of the mob swung rapidly to the front, presenting a scattered second barrier; Jenna tripped on a fallen body, lost his cigar, and swore that he must find it. A dagger struck his sword-arm. He staggered and flourished his blade in the air, calling "On!" without stirring. "This infernal cigar!" he said; and to the mob, "What mongrel of you took my cigar?" Stones thumped on his breast; the barrier-line ahead grew denser. "I'll go at them first; you're bleeding," said Wilfrid. They were refreshed by the sound of German cheering, as in approach. Jenna uplifted a crow of the regimental hurrah of the charge; it was answered; on they went and got through the second fence, saw their comrades, and were running to meet them, when a weighted ball hit Wilfrid on the back of the head. He fell, as he believed, on a cushion of down, and saw

thousands of saints dancing with lamps along cathedral aisles.

The next time he opened his eyes he fancied he had dropped into the vaults of the cathedral. His sensation of sinking was so vivid that he feared lest he should be going still further below. There was a lamp in the chamber, and a young man sat reading by the light of the lamp. Vision danced fantastically on Wilfrid's brain. He saw that he rocked as in a ship, yet there was no noise of the sea; nothing save the remote thunder haunting empty ears at strain for sound. He looked again; the young man was gone, the lamp was flickering. Then he became conscious of a strong ray on his eyelids; he beheld his enemy gazing down on him and swooned. It was with joy that, when his wits returned, he found himself looking on the young man by the lamp. "That other face was a dream," he thought, and studied the aspect of the young man with the unwearied attentiveness of partial stupor, that can note accurately, but cannot deduce from its noting, and is inveterate in patience because it is unideaed. Memory wakened first.

"Guidascarpi!" he said to himself.

The name was uttered half aloud. The young man started and closed his book.

“You know me?” he asked.

“You are Guidascarpi?”

“I am.”

“Guidascarpi, I think I helped to save your life in Meran.”

The young man stooped over him. “You speak of my brother Angelo. I am Rinaldo. My debt to you is the same, if you have served him.”

“Is he safe?”

“He is in Lugano.”

“The signorina Vittoria?”

“In Turin.”

“Where am I?”

The reply came from another mouth than Rinaldo’s.

“You are in the poor lodging of the shoemaker, whose shoes, if you had thought fit to wear them, would have conducted you anywhere but to this place.”

“Who are you?” Wilfrid moaned.

“You ask who I am. I am the Eye of Italy. I am the Cat who sees in the dark.” Barto Rizzo raised the lamp and stood at his feet. “Look straight. You know me, I think.”

Wilfrid sighed, “Yes, I know you; do your worst.”

His head throbbed with the hearing of a heavy

laugh, as if a hammer had knocked it. What ensued he knew not; he was left to his rest. He lay there many days and nights, that were marked by no change of light; the lamp burned unwearyingly. Rinaldo and a woman tended him. The sign of his reviving strength was shown by a complaint he launched at the earthy smell of the place.

"It is like death," said Rinaldo, coming to his side. "I am used to it, and familiar with death too," he added in a musical undertone.

"Are you also a prisoner here?" Wilfrid questioned him.

"I am."

"The brute does not kill, then?"

"No; he saves. I owe my life to him. He has rescued yours."

"Mine?" said Wilfrid.

"You would have been torn to pieces in the streets but for Barto Rizzo."

The streets were the world above to Wilfrid; he was eager to hear of the doings in them. Rinaldo told him that the tobacco-war raged still; the soldiery had recently received orders to smoke abroad, and street battles were hourly occurring. "They call this government!" he interjected.

He was a soft-voiced youth; slim and tall and dark,

like Angelo, but with a more studious forehead. The book he was constantly reading was a book of chemistry. He entertained Wilfrid with very strange talk. He spoke of the stars and of a destiny. He cited certain minor events of his life to show the ground of his present belief in there being a written destiny for each individual man. "Angelo and I know it well. It was revealed to us when we were boys. It has been certified to us up to this moment. Mark what I tell you," he pursued in a devout sincerity of manner that baffled remonstrance, "*my* days end with this new year. His end with the year following. Our house is dead."

Wilfrid pressed his hand. "Have you not been too long underground?"

"That is the conviction I am coming to. But when I go out to breathe the air of heaven, I go to my fate. Should I hesitate? We Italians of this period are children of thunder and live the life of a flash. The worms may creep on; the men must die. Out of us springs a better world. Romara, Ammiani, Mercadesco, Montesini, Rufo, Cardi, whether they see it or not, will sweep forward to it. To some of them, one additional day of breath is precious. Not so for Angelo and me. We are unbeloved. We have neither mother, nor sister, nor betrothed. What

is an existence that can fly to no human arms? I have been too long underground, because, while I continue to hide, I am as a drawn sword between two lovers."

The previous mention of Ammiani's name, together with the knowledge he had of Ammiani's relationship to the Guidascari, pointed an instant identification of these lovers to Wilfrid.

He asked feverishly who they were, and looked his best simplicity, as one who was always interested by stories of lovers.

The voice of Barto Rizzo, singing "Vittoria!" stopped Rinaldo's reply; but Wilfrid read it in his smile at that word. He was too weak to restrain his anguish, and flung on the couch and sobbed. Rinaldo supposed that he was in fear of Barto, and encouraged him to meet the man confidently. A lusty "Viva l'Italia! Vittoria!" heralded Barto's entrance. "My boy! my noblest! we have beaten them—the cravens! Tell me now—have I served an apprenticeship to the devil for nothing? We have struck the cigars out of their mouths and the monopoly-money out of their pockets. They have surrendered. The Imperial order prohibits soldiers from smoking in the streets of Milan, and so throughout Lombardy! Soon we will have the prisons empty, by our own order.

Trouble yourself no more about Ammiani. He shall come out to the sound of trumpets. I hear them! Hither, my Rosellina, my plump melon; up with your red lips, and buss me a Napoleon salute—ha! ha!”

Barto's wife went into his huge arm, and submissively lifted her face. He kissed her like a barbaric king, laughing as from wine.

Wilfrid smothered his head from this incarnate thunder. He was unnoticed by Barto. Presently a silence told him that he was left to himself. An idea possessed him that the triumph of the Italians meant the release of Ammiani, and his release the loss of Vittoria for ever. Since her graceless return of his devotion to her in Meran, something like a passion—arising from the sole spring by which he could be excited to conceive a passion—had filled his heart. He was one of those who delight to dally with gentleness and faith, as with things that are their heritage; but the mere suspicion of coquetry and indifference plunged him into a fury of jealous wrathfulness, and tossed so desirable an image of beauty before him that his mad thirst to embrace it seemed love. By our manner of loving we are known. He thought it no meanness to escape and cause a warning to be conveyed to the Government that there was another attempt brewing for the

rescue of Count Ammiani. Acting forthwith on the hot impulse, he seized the lamp. The door was unlocked. Luckier than Luigi had been, he found a ladder outside, and a square opening through which he crawled; continuing to ascend along close passages and up narrow flights of stairs, that appeared to him to be fashioned to avoid the rooms of the house. At last he pushed a door, and found himself in an armoury, among stands of muskets, swords, bayonets, cartouche-boxes, and, most singular of all, though he observed them last, small brass pieces of cannon, shining with polish. Shot was piled in pyramids beneath their mouths. He examined the guns admiringly. There were rows of daggers along shelves; some in sheath, others bare; one that had been hastily wiped showed a smear of ropy blood. He stood debating whether he should seize a sword for his protection. In the act of trying its temper on the floor, the sword-hilt was knocked from his hand, and he felt a coil of arms around him. He was in the imprisoning embrace of Barto Rizzo's wife. His first, and perhaps natural, impression accused her of a violent display of an eccentric passion for his manly charms; and the tighter she locked him, the more reasonably was he held to suppose it; but as, while stamping on the floor, she

offered nothing to his eyes save the yellow poll of her neck, and hung neither panting nor speaking, he became undeceived. His struggles were preposterous; his lively sense of ridicule speedily stopped them. He remained passive, from time to time desperately adjuring his living prison to let him loose, or to conduct him whither he had come; but the inexorable coil kept fast—how long there was no guessing—till he could have roared out tears of rage, and that is extremity for an Englishman. Rinaldo arrived in his aid; but the woman still clung to him. He was freed only by the voice of Barto Rizzo, who marched him back. Rinaldo subsequently told him that his discovery of the armoury necessitated his confinement.

“Necessitates it!” cried Wilfrid. “Is this your Italian gratitude?”

The other answered: “My friend, you risked your fortune for my brother; but this is a case that concerns our country.”

He deemed these words to be an unquestionable justification, for he said no more. After this they ceased to converse. Each lay down on his strip of couch-matting; rose and ate, and passed the dreadful untimed hours; nor would Wilfrid ask whether it was day or night. We belong to time so utterly, that when we get no note of time, it wears the

shrouded head of death for us already. Rinaldo could quit the place as he pleased; he knew the hours; and Wilfrid supposed that it must be hatred that kept him from voluntarily divulging that blessed piece of knowledge. He had to encourage a retorting spirit of hatred in order to mask his intense craving. By an assiduous calculation of seconds and minutes, he was enabled to judge that the lamp burned a space of six hours before it required replenishing. Barto Rizzo's wife trimmed it regularly, but the accursed woman came at all seasons. She brought their meals irregularly, and she would never open her lips: she was like a guardian of the tombs. Wilfrid abandoned his dream of the variation of night and day, and with that the sense of life deadened, as the lamp did towards the sixth hour. Thenceforward his existence fed on the movements of his companion, the workings of whose mind he began to read with a marvellous insight. He knew once, long in advance of the act or an indication of it, that Rinaldo was bent on prayer. Rinaldo had slightly closed his eyelids during the perusal of his book; he had taken a pencil and traced lines on it from memory, and dotted points here and there; he had left the room, and returned to resume his study. Then, after closing the book softly he had taken up the mark he was accus-

tomed to place in the last page of his reading, and tossed it away. Wilfrid was prepared to clap hands when he should see the hated fellow drop on his knees; but when that sight verified his calculation, he huddled himself exultingly in his couch-cloth:—it was like a confirming clamour to him that he was yet wholly alive. He watched the anguish of the prayer, and was rewarded for the strain of his faculties by sleep. Barto Rizzo's rough voice awakened him. Barto had evidently just communicated dismal tidings to Rinaldo, who left the vault with him, and was absent long enough to make Wilfrid forget his hatred in an irresistible desire to catch him by the arm and look in his face.

“Ah! you have not forsaken me,” the greeting leaped out.

“Not now,” said Rinaldo.

“Do you think of going?”

“I will speak to you presently, my friend.”

“Hound!” cried Wilfrid, and turned his face to the wall.

Until he slept, he heard the rapid travelling of a pen; on his awakening, the pen vexed him like a chirping cricket that tells us that cock-crow is long distant when we are moaning for the dawn. Great drops of sweat were on Rinaldo's forehead. He wrote

as one who poured forth a history without pause. Barto's wife came to the lamp and beckoned him out, bearing the lamp away. There was now for the first time darkness in this vault. Wilfrid called Rinaldo by name, and heard nothing but the fear of the place, which seemed to rise bristling at his voice and shrink from it. He called till dread of his voice held him dumb. "I am, then, a coward," he thought. Nor could he by-and-by repress a start of terror on hearing Rinaldo speak out of the darkness. With screams for the lamp, and cries that he was suffering slow murder, he underwent a paroxysm in the effort to conceal his abject horror. Rinaldo sat by his side patiently. At last, he said: "We are both of us prisoners on equal terms now." That was quieting intelligence to Wilfrid, who asked eagerly: "What hour is it?"

It was eleven of the forenoon. Wilfrid strove to dissociate his recollection of clear daylight from the pressure of the hideous featureless time surrounding him. He asked: "What week?" It was the first week in March. Wilfrid could not keep from sobbing aloud. In the early period of such a captivity, imagination, deprived of all other food, conjures phantasms for the employment of the brain; but there is still some consciousness within the torpid intellect wake-

ful to laugh at them as they fly, though they have held us at their mercy. The face of time had been imaged like the withering masque of a corpse to him. He had felt, nevertheless, that things had gone on as we trust them to do at the closing of our eyelids: he had preserved a mystical remote faith in the steady running of the world above, and hugged it as his most precious treasure. A thunder was rolled in his ears when he heard of the flight of two months at one bound. Two big months! He would have guessed, at farthest, two weeks. "I have been two months in one shirt? Impossible!" he exclaimed. His serious idea (he cherished it for the support of his reason) was, that the world above had played a mad prank since he had been shuffled off its stage.

"It can't be March," he said. "Is there sunlight overhead?"

"It is a true Milanese March," Rinaldo replied.

"Why am I kept a prisoner?"

"I cannot say. There must be some idea of making use of you."

"Have you arms?"

"I have none."

"You know where they're to be had."

"I know, but I would not take them, if I could. They, my friend, are for a better cause."

"A thousand curses on your country!" cried Wilfrid. "Give me air; give me freedom; I am stifled; I am eaten up with dirt; I am half dead. Are we never to have the lamp again?"

"Hear me speak," Rinaldo stopped his ravings. "I will tell you what my position is. A second attempt has been made to help Count Ammiani's escape; it has failed. He is detained a prisoner by the government under the pretence that he is implicated in the slaying of an Austrian noble by the hands of two brothers, one of whom slew him justly—not as a dog is slain, but according to every honourable stipulation of the code. I was the witness of the deed. It is for me that my cousin, Count Ammiani, droops in prison when he should be with his bride. Let me speak on, I pray you. I have said that I stand between two lovers. I can release him, I know well, by giving myself up to the government. Unless I do so instantly, he will be removed from Milan to one of their fortresses in the interior, and there he may cry to the walls and iron-bars for his trial. They are aware that he is dear to Milan, and these two miserable attempts have furnished them with their excuse. Barto Rizzo bids me wait. I have waited: I can wait no longer. The lamp is withheld from me to stop my writing to my brother,

that I may warn him of my design, but the letter is written ; the messenger is on his way to Lugano. I do not state my intentions before I have taken measures to accomplish them. I am as much Barto Rizzo's prisoner now as you are."

The plague of darkness and thirst for daylight prevented Wilfrid from having any other sentiment than gladness that a companion equally unfortunate with himself was here, and equally desirous to go forth. When Barto's wife brought their meal, and the lamp to light them eating it, Rinaldo handed her pen, ink, pencil, paper, all the material of correspondence ; upon which, as one who had received a stipulated exchange, she let the lamp remain. While the new and thrice-dear rays were illumining her dark-coloured solid beauty, I know not what touch of manlike envy or hurt vanity led Wilfrid to observe that the woman's eyes dwelt with a singular fulness and softness on Rinaldo. It was fulness and softness void of fire, a true ox-eyed gaze, but human in the fall of the eyelids ; almost such as an early poet of the brush gave to the Virgin carrying her Child, to become an everlasting reduplicated image of a mother's strong beneficence of love. He called Rinaldo's attention to it when the woman had gone. Rinaldo understood his meaning at once.

“It will have to be so, I fear,” he said; “I have thought of it. But if I lead her to disobey Barto, there is little hope for the poor soul.” He rose up straight, like one who would utter grace for meat. “Must we, O my God, give a sacrifice at every step?”

With that he resumed his seat stiffly, and bent and murmured to himself. Wilfrid had at one time of his life imagined that he was marked by a peculiar distinction from the common herd; but contact with this young man taught him to feel his fellowship towards the world at large, and to rejoice at it, though it partially humbled him.

They had no further visit from Barto Rizzo. The woman tended them in the same unswerving silence, with at times that adorable maternity of aspect. Wilfrid was touched by commiseration for her. He was too bitterly fretful on account of clean linen and the liberty which fluttered the prospect of it, to think much upon what her fate might be: perhaps a beating, perhaps the knife. But the vileness of wearing one shirt two months and more had hardened his heart; and though he was considerate enough not to prompt his companion very impatiently, he submitted desperate futile schemes to him, and suggested—“To-night?—to-morrow?—the next day?”

Rinaldo did not heed him. He lay on his couch like one who bleeds inwardly, thinking of the complacent faithfulness of that poor creature's face. Barto Rizzo had sworn to him that there should be a rising in Milan before the month was out ; but he had lost all confidence in Milanese risings. Ammiani would be removed, if he delayed ; and he knew that the moment his letter reached Lugano, Angelo would start for Milan and claim to surrender in his stead. The woman came, and went forth, and Rinaldo did not look at her until his resolve was firm.

He said to Wilfrid in her presence, "Swear that you will reveal nothing of this house."

Wilfrid spiritedly pronounced his gladdest oath.

"It is dark in the streets," Rinaldo addressed the woman. "Lead us out, for the hour has come when I must go."

She clutched her hands below her bosom to stop its great heaving, and stood as one smitten by the sudden hearing of her sentence. The sight was pitiful, for her face scarcely changed ; the anguish was expressionless. Rinaldo pointed sternly to the door.

"Stay," Wilfrid interposed. "That wretch may be in the house, and will kill her."

"She is not thinking of herself," said Rinaldo.

"But, stay," Wilfrid repeated. The woman's way of taking breath shocked and enfeebled him.

Rinaldo threw the door open.

"Must you? must you?" her voice broke.

"Waste no words."

"You have not seen a priest."

"I go to him."

"You die!"

"What is death to me? Be dumb, that I may think well of you till my last moment."

"What is death to me? Be dumb!"

She had spoken with her eyes fixed on his couch. It was the figure of one upon the scaffold, knitting her frame to hold up a strangled heart.

"What is death to me? Be dumb!" she echoed him many times on the rise and fall of her breathing, and turned to get him in her eyes. "Be dumb! be dumb!" She threw her arms wide out, and pressed his temples and kissed him.

The scene was like hot iron to Wilfrid's senses. When he heard her coolly asking him for his handkerchief to blind him, he had forgotten the purpose, and gave it mechanically. Nothing was uttered throughout the long mountings and descent of stairs. They passed across one corridor where the walls told of a humming assemblage of men within. A current

of keen air was the first salute Wilfrid received from the world above ; his handkerchief was loosened ; he stood foolish as a blind man, weak as a hospital patient, on the steps leading into a small square of visible darkness, and heard the door shut behind him. Rinaldo led him from the court to the street.

“Farewell,” he said. “Get some housing instantly ; avoid exposure to the air. I leave you.”

Wilfrid spent his tongue in a fruitless and meaningless remonstrance. “And you?” he had the grace to ask.

“I go straight to find a priest. Farewell.”

So they parted.

CHAPTER XXX.

EPISODES OF THE REVOLT AND THE WAR.

THE FIVE DAYS OF MILAN.

THE same hand which brought Rinaldo's letter to his brother delivered a message from Barto Rizzo, bidding Angelo to start at once and head a stout dozen or so of gallant Swiss. The letter and the message appeared to be grievous contradictions: one was evidently a note of despair, while the other sung like a trumpet. But both were of a character to draw him swiftly on to Milan. He sent word to his Lugano friends, naming a village among the mountains between Como and Varese, that they might join him there if they pleased.

Towards nightfall, on the nineteenth of the month, he stood with a small band of Ticinese and Italian fighting lads two miles distant from the city. There was a momentary break in long hours of rain; the

air was full of inexplicable sounds, that floated over them like a toning of multitudes wailing and singing fitfully behind a swaying screen. They bent their heads. At intervals a sovereign stamp on the pulsation of the uproar said, distinct as a voice in the ear—Cannon. “Milan’s alive!” Angelo cried, and they streamed forward under the hurry of stars and scud, till thumping guns and pattering musket-shots, the long big boom of surgent hosts, and the muffled voluming and crash of storm-bells, proclaimed that the insurrection was hot. A rout of peasants bearing immense ladders met them, and they joined with cheers, and rushed to the walls. As yet no gate was in the possession of the people. The walls showed bayonet-points: a thin hedge of steel encircled a pit of fire. Angelo resolved to break through at once. The peasants hesitated, but his own men were of one mind to follow, and, planting his ladder in the ditch, he rushed up foremost. The ladder was full short; he called out in German to a soldier to reach his hand down, and the butt-end of a musket was dropped, which he grasped, and by this aid sprang to the parapet, and was seized. “Stop,” he said, “there’s a fellow below with my brandy-flask and portmanteau.” The soldiers were Italians; they laughed, and hauled away at man after man of the mounting troop, calling

alternately "brandy-flask!" "portmanteau!" as each one raised a head above the parapet. "The signor has a good supply of spirits and baggage," they remarked. He gave them money for portage, saying, "You see, the gates are held by that infernal people, and a quiet traveller must come over the walls. Viva l'Italia! who follows me?" He carried away three of those present. The remainder swore that they and their comrades would be on his side on the morrow. Guided by the new accession to his force, Angelo gained the streets. All shots had ceased; the streets were lighted with torches and hand-lamps; barricades were up everywhere, like a convulsion of the earth. Tired of receiving challenges and mounting the endless piles of stones, he sat down at the head of the Corso di Porta Nuova, and took refreshments from the hands of ladies. The house-doors were all open. The ladies came forth bearing wine and minestra, meat and bread, on trays; and quiet eating and drinking, and fortifying of the barricades, went on. Men were rubbing their arms and trying rusty gun-locks. Few of them had not seen Barto Rizzo that day; but Angelo could get no tidings of his brother. He slept on a door-step, dreaming that he was blown about among the angels of heaven and hell by a glorious tempest. Near

morning an officer of volunteers came to inspect the barricade defences. Angelo knew him by sight; it was Luciano Romara. He explained the position of the opposing forces. The marshal, he said, was clearly no street-fighter. Estimating the army under his orders in Milan at from ten to eleven thousand men of all arms, it was impossible for him to guard the gates and the walls, and at the same time fight the city. Nor could he provision his troops. Yesterday the troops had made one charge and done mischief, but they had immediately retired. "And if they take to cannonading us to-day, we shall know what that means," Romara concluded. Angelo wanted to join him. "No, stay here," said Romara. "I think you are a man who won't give ground." He had not seen either Rinaldo or Ammiani, but spoke of both as certain to be rescued. Rain and cannon filled the weary space of that day. Some of the barricades fronting the city gates had been battered down by nightfall; they were restored within an hour. Their defenders entered the houses right and left during the cannonade, waiting to meet the charge; but the Austrians held off. "They have no plan," Romara said on his second visit of inspection; "they are waiting on Fortune, and starve meanwhile. We can beat them at that business." Romara took

Angelo and his Swiss away with him. The interior of the city was abandoned by the Imperialists, who held two or three of the principal buildings and the square of the Duomo. Clouds were driving thick across the cold-gleaming sky when the storm-bells burst out with the wild Jubilee-music of insurrection—a carol, a jangle of all discord, savage as flame. Every church of the city lent its iron tongue to the peal; and now they joined and now rolled apart, now joined again and clanged like souls shrieking across the black gulfs of an earthquake; they swam aloft with mournful delirium, tumbled together, were scattered in spray, dissolved, renewed, died, as a last worn wave casts itself on an unfooted shore, and rang again as through rent doorways, became a clamorous host, an iron body, a pressure as of a down-drawn firmament, and once more a hollow vast, as if the abysses of the Circles were sounded through and through. To the Milanese it was an intoxication; it was the howling of madness to the Austrians—a torment and a terror: they could neither sing, nor laugh, nor talk under it. Where they stood in the city, the troops could barely hear their officers' call of command. No sooner had the bells broken out than the length of every street and Corso flashed with the tri-coloured flag; musket-muzzles peeped from the windows; men with great

squares of pavement lined the roofs. Romara mounted a stiff barricade and beheld a scattered regiment running the gauntlet of storms of shot and missiles, in full retreat towards the citadel. On they came, officers in front for the charge, as usual with the Austrians; fire on both flanks, a furious mob at their heels, and the barricade before them. They rushed at Romara, and were hurled back, and stood in a riddled lump. Suddenly Romara knocked up the rifles of the couching Swiss; he yelled to the houses to stop firing. "Surrender your prisoners,—you shall pass," he called. He had seen one dear head in the knot of the soldiery. No answer was given. Romara, with Angelo and his Swiss and the ranks of the barricade, poured over and pierced the streaming mass, steel for steel.

"Ammiani! Ammiani!" Romara cried; a roar from the other side, "Barto! Barto! the Great Cat!" met the cry. The Austrians struck up a cheer under the iron derision of the bells; it was ludicrous; it was as if a door had slammed on their mouths, ringing tremendous echoes in a vaulted roof. They stood sweeping fire in two oblong lines; a show of military array was preserved like a tattered robe, till Romara drove at their centre and left the retreat clear across the barricade. Then the whitecoats were seen flowing

over, the motley surging hosts from the city in pursuit—foam of a storm-torrent hurled forward by the black tumult of precipitous waters. Angelo fell on his brother's neck; Romara clasped Carlo Ammiani. These two were being marched from the prison to the citadel when Barto Rizzo, who had prepared to storm the building, assailed the troops. To him mainly they were indebted for their rescue.

Even in that ecstasy of meeting, the young men smiled at the preternatural transport on his features as he bounded by them, mad for slaughter, and mounting a small brass gun on the barricade, sent the charges of shot into the rear of the enemy. He kissed the black lip of his little thunderer in a rapture of passion; called it his wife, his naked wife; the best of mistresses, who spoke only when he charged her to speak; raved that she was fair, and liked hugging; that she was true, and the handsomest daughter of Italy; that she would be the mother of big ones—none better than herself, though they were mountains of sulphur big enough to make one gulp of an army.

His wife in the flesh stood at his feet with a hand-grenade and a rifle, daggers and pistols in her belt. Her face was black with powder-smoke as the muzzle of the gun. She looked at Rinaldo once, and Rinaldo

at her ; both dropped their eyes, for their joy at seeing one another alive was mighty.

Dead Austrians were gathered in a heap. Dead and wounded Milanese were taken into the houses. Wine was brought forth by ladies and household women. An old crutched beggar, who had performed a deed of singular intrepidity in himself kindling a fire at the door of one of the principal buildings besieged by the people, and who showed perforated rags with a comical ejaculation of thanks to the Austrians for knowing how to hit a scarecrow and make a beggar holy, was the object of particular attention. Barto seated him on his gun, saying that his mistress and beauty was honoured ; ladies were proud in waiting on the fine frowsy old man. It chanced during that morning that Wilfrid Pierson had attached himself to Lieutenant Jenna's regiment as a volunteer. He had no arms, nothing but a huge white umbrella, under which he walked dry in the heavy rain, and passed through the fire like an impassive spectator of queer events. Angelo's Swiss had captured them, and the mob were maltreating them because they declined to shout for this valorous ancient beggarman. "No doubt he's a capital fellow," said Jenna ; "but '*Viva Sottocorni*' is not my language ;" and the spirited little subaltern repeated his

“Excuse me” with very good temper, while one knocked off his shako, another tugged at his coat-skirts. Wilfrid sang out to the Guidascarpi, and the brothers sprang to him and set them free; but the mob, like any other wild beast gorged with blood, wanted play, and urged Barto to insist that these victims should shout the viva in exaltation of their hero.

“Is there a finer voice than mine?” said Barto, and he roared the ‘viva’ like a melodious bull. Yet Wilfrid saw that he had been recognised. In the hour of triumph Barto Rizzi had no lust for petty vengeance. The magnanimous devil plumped his gorge contentedly on victory. His ardour blazed from his swarthy crimson features like a blown fire, when scouts came running down with word that all about the Porta Camosina, Madonna del Carmine, and the Gardens, the Austrians were reaping the white flag of the inhabitants of that district. Thitherward his cry of “Down with the Tedeschi!” led the boiling tide. Rinaldo drew Wilfrid and Jenna to an open doorway, counselling the latter to strip the gold from his coat and speak his Italian in monosyllables. A woman of the house gave her promise to shelter and to pass them forward. Romara, Ammiani, and the Guidascarpi, went straight to the Casa Gonfalonieri,

where they hoped to see stray members of the Council of War, and hear a correction of certain unpleasant rumours concerning the dealings of the Provisional Government with Charles Albert. The first crack of a division between the patriot force and the aristocracy commenced this day; the day following it was a breach.

A little before dusk the bells of the city ceased their hammering, and when they ceased, all noises of men and musketry seemed childish. The woman who had promised to lead Wilfrid and Jenna towards the citadel, feared no longer either for herself or them, and passed them on up the Corso Francesco past the Contrada del Monte. Jenna pointed out the Duchess of Graätli's house, saying, "By the way, the Lenkensteins are here; they left Venice last week. Of course you know, or don't you?—and there they must stop, I suppose." Wilfrid nodded an immediate good-by to her, and crossed to the house-door. His eccentric fashion of acting had given him fame in the army, but Jenna stormed at it now, and begged him to come on and present himself to General Schöneck or to General Wohlimleib, if not to General Pierson. Wilfrid refused even to look behind him. In fact, it was a part of the gallant fellow's coxcombry (or nationality) to play the Englishman. He remained

fixed by the house-door till midnight, when a body of men in the garb of citizens, volubly and violently Italian in their talk, struck thrice at the door. Wilfrid perceived Count Lenkenstein among them. The ladies Bianca, Anna, and Lena, issued mantled and hooded between the lights of two barricade watch-fires. Wilfrid stepped after them. They had the pass-word, for the barricades were crossed. The captain of the head-barricade in the Corso demurred, requiring a counter-sign. Straightway he was cut down. He blew an alarm-call, when up sprang a hundred torches. The band of Germans dashed at the barricade as at the tusks of a boar. They were picked men, most of them officers, but a scanty number in the thick of an armed populace. Wilfrid saw the lighted passage into the great house, and thither, throwing out his arms, he bore the affrighted group of ladies, as a careful shepherd might do. Returning to Count Lenkenstein's side, "Where are they?" the count said, in mortal dread. "Safe," Wilfrid replied. The count frowned at him inquisitively. "Cut your way through, and on!" he cried to three or four who hung near him; and these went to the slaughter.

"Why do you stand by me, sir?" said the count.

Interior barricades were pouring their combatants

to the spot; Count Lenkenstein was plunged upon the door-steps. Wilfrid gained half-a-minute's parley by shouting in his foreign accent, "Would you hurt an Englishman?" Some one took him by the arm, and helping to raise the count, hurried them both into the house.

"You must make excuses for popular fury in times like these," the stranger observed.

The Austrian nobleman asked him stiffly for his name. The name of Count Ammiani was given. "I think you know it," Carlo added.

"You escaped from your lawful imprisonment this day, did you not?—you and your cousin, the assassin. I talk of law! I might as justly talk of honour. Who lives here?"

Carlo contained himself to answer, "The present occupant is, I believe, if I have hit the house I was seeking, the countess d'Isorella."

"My family were placed here, sir?" Count Lenkenstein inquired of Wilfrid. But Wilfrid's attention was frozen by the sight of Vittoria's lover. A wifely call of "Adalbert" from above quieted the count's anxiety.

"Countess d'Isorella," he said. "I know that woman. She belongs to the secret cabinet of Carlo Alberto—a woman with three edges. Did she not

visit you in prison two weeks ago? I speak to you, Count Ammiani. She applied to the archduke and the marshal for permission to visit you. It was accorded. To the devil with our days of benignity! She was from Turin. The shuffle has made her my hostess for the nonce. I will go to her. You, sir," the count turned to Wilfrid—"you will stay below. Are you in the pay of the insurgents?"

Wilfrid, the weakest of human beings where women were involved with him, did one of the hardest things which can task a young man's fortitude: he looked his superior in the face, and neither blenched, nor frowned, nor spoke.

Ammiani spoke for him. "There is no pay given in our ranks."

"The licence to rob is supposed to be an equivalent," said the count.

Countess d'Isorella herself came downstairs, with profuse apologies for the absence of all her male domestics, and many delicate dimples about her mouth in uttering them. Her look at Ammiani struck Wilfrid as having a peculiar burden either of meaning or of passion in it. The count grimaced angrily when he heard that his sister Lena was not yet able to bear the fatigue of a walk to the citadel. "I

fear you must all be my guests, for an hour at least," said the countess.

Wilfrid was left pacing the hall. He thought he had never beheld so splendid a person, or one so subjugatingly gracious. Her speech and manner poured oil on the uncivil Austrian nobleman. What perchance had stricken Lena? He guessed; and guessed it rightly. A folded scrap of paper signed by the Countess of Lenkenstein was brought to him.

It said:—"Are you making common cause with the rebels? Reply. One asks who should be told."

He wrote:—"I am an outcast of the army. I fight as a volunteer with the K. K. troops. Could I abandon them in their peril?"

The touch of sentiment he appended for Lena's comfort. He was too strongly impressed by the new vision of beauty in the house for his imagination to be flushed by the romantic posture of his devotion to a trailing flag.

No other message was delivered. Ammiani presently descended and obtained a guard from the barricade; word was sent on to the barricades in advance towards the citadel. Wilfrid stood aside as Count Lenkenstein led the ladies to the door, bearing Lena on his arm. She passed her lover veiled. The

count said, "You follow." He used the menial second person plural of German, and repeated it peremptorily.

"I follow no civilian," said Wilfrid.

"Remember, sir, that if you are seen with arms in your hands, and are not in the ranks, you run the chances of being hanged."

Lena broke loose from her brother; in spite of Anna's sharp remonstrance and the count's vexed stamp of the foot, she implored her lover:—"Come with us; pardon us; protect me—me! You shall not be treated harshly. They shall not—— Oh! be near me. I have been ill; I shrink from danger. Be near me!"

Such humble pleading permitted Wilfrid's sore spirit to succumb with the requisite show of chivalrous dignity. He bowed, and gravely opened his enormous umbrella, which he held up over the heads of the ladies, while Ammiani led the way. All was quiet towards the citadel. A fog of plashing rain hung in red gloom about the many watch-fires of the insurgents, but the Austrian head-quarters lay sombre and still. Close at the gates, Ammiani saluted the ladies. Wilfrid did the same, and heard Lena's call to him unmoved.

"May I dare to hint to you that it would be

better for you to join your party?" said Ammiani.

Wilfrid walked on. After appearing to weigh the matter, he answered, "The umbrella will be of no further service to them to-night."

Ammiani laughed, and begged to be forgiven; but he could have done nothing more flattering.

Sore at all points, tricked and ruined, irascible under the sense of his injuries, hating everybody and not honouring himself, Wilfrid was fast growing to be an eccentric by profession. To appear cool and careless was the great effort of his mind.

"We were introduced one day in the Piazza d'Armi," said Ammiani. "I would have found means to convey my apologies to you for my behaviour on that occasion, but I have been at the mercy of my enemies. Lieutenant Pierson, will you pardon me? I have learnt how dear you and your family should be to me. Pray, accept my excuses and my counsel. The Countess Lena was my friend when I was a boy. She is in deep distress."

"I thank you, Count Ammiani, for your extremely disinterested advice," said Wilfrid; but the Italian was not cut to the quick by his irony; and he added: "I have hoisted, you perceive, the white umbrella instead of wearing the white coat. It is almost as

good as an hotel in these times; it gives as much shelter and nearly as much provision, and, I may say, better attendance. Good-night. You will be at it again about daylight, I suppose?"

"Possibly a little before," said Ammiani, cooled by the false ring of this kind of speech.

"It's useless to expect that your infernal bells will not burst out like all the lunatics on earth?"

"Quite useless, I fear. Good-night."

Ammiani charged one of the men at an outer barricade to follow the white umbrella and pass it on.

He returned to the Countess d'Isorella, who was awaiting him, and alone.

This glorious head had aroused his first boyish passion. Scandal was busy concerning the two, when Violetta d'Asola, the youthfulest widow in Lombardy and the loveliest woman, gave her hand to Count d'Isorella, who took it without question of the boy Ammiani. Carlo's mother assisted in that arrangement; a maternal plot, for which he could thank her only after he had seen Vittoria, and then had heard the buzz of whispers at Violetta's name. Countess d'Isorella proved her friendship to have survived the old passion, by travelling expressly from Turin to obtain leave to visit him in prison. It was a marvellous face to look upon between prison walls.

Rescued while the soldiers were marching him to the citadel that day, he was called by pure duty to pay his respects to the countess as soon as he had heard from his mother that she was in the city. Nor was his mother sorry that he should go. She had patiently submitted to the fact of his betrothal to Vittoria, which was his safeguard in similar perils; and she rather hoped for Violetta to wean him from his extreme republicanism. By arguments? By influence, perhaps. Carlo's republicanism was preternatural in her sight, and she presumed that Violetta would talk to him discreetly and persuasively of the noble designs of the king.

Violetta d'Isorella received him with a gracious lifting of her fingers to his lips; congratulating him on his escape, and on the good fortune of the day. She laughed at the Lenkensteins and the singular Englishman; sat down to a little supper-tray, and pouted humorously as she asked him to feed on confects and wine; the huge appetites of the insurgents had devoured all her meat and bread.

"Why are you here?" he said.

She did well in replying boldly, "For the king."

"Would you tell another that it is for the king?"

"Would I speak to another as I speak to you?"

Ammiani inclined his head.

They spoke of the prospects of the insurrection, of the expected outbreak in Venice, the eruption of Paris and Vienna, and the new life of Italy; touching on Carlo Alberto to explode the truce in a laughing dissension. At last she said seriously, "I am a born Venetian, you know; I am not Piedmontese. Let me be sure that the king betrays the country, and I will prefer many heads to one. Excuse me if I am more womanly just at present. The king has sent his accredited messenger Tartini to the Provisional Government, requesting it to accept his authority. Why not? why not? on both sides. Count Medole gives his adhesion to the king, but you have a Council of War that rejects the king's overtures—a revolt within a revolt. It is deplorable. You *must* have an army. The Piedmontese once over the Ticino, how can you act in opposition to it? You *must* learn to take a master. The king is only, or he appears, tricky because you compel him to wind and counterplot. I swear to you, Italy is his foremost thought. The Star of Italy sits on the Cross of Savoy."

Ammiani kept his eyelids modestly down. "Ten thousand to plead for him, such as you!" he said. "But there is only one!"

"If you had been headstrong once upon a time,

and I had been weak, you see, my Carlo, you would have been a domestic tyrant, I a rebel. You will not admit the existence of a virtue in an opposite opinion. Wise was your mother when she said ‘No’ to a wilful boy!”

Violetta lit her cigarette and puffed the smoke lightly.

“I told you in that horrid dungeon, my Carlo Amaranto—I call you by the old name—the old name is sweet!—I told you that your Vittoria is enamoured of the king. She blushes like a battle-flag for the king. I have heard her ‘Viva il Re!’ It was musical.”

“So I should have thought.”

“Ay, but my amaranto-innamorato, does it not foretell strife? Would you ever—ever take a heart with a king’s head stamped on it into your arms?”

“Give me the chance!”

He was guilty of this ardent piece of innocence though Violetta had pitched her voice in the key significant of a secret thing belonging to two memories that had not always flowed dividedly.

“Like a common coin?” she resumed.

“*A heart with a king’s head stamped on it like a common coin.*”

He recollected the sentence. He had once, during

the heat of his grief for Giacomo Piaveni, cast it in her teeth.

Violetta repeated it, as to herself, tonelessly; a method of making an old unkindness strike back on its author with effect.

"Did we part good friends? I forget," she broke the silence.

"We meet, and we will be the best of friends," said Ammiani.

"Tell your mother I am not three years older than her son,—I am thirty. Who will make me young again? Tell her, my Carlo, that the genius for intrigue, of which she accuses me, develops at a surprising rate. As regards my beauty——" the countess put a tooth of pearl on her soft underlip.

Ammiani assured her that he would find words of his own for her beauty.

"I hear the eulogy, I know the sonnet," said Violetta, smiling, and described the points of a brunette: the thick black banded hair, the full brown eyes, the plastic brows couching over them;—it was Vittoria's face. Violetta was a flower of colour, fair, with but one shade of dark tinting on her brown eye-brows and eye-lashes, as you may see a strip of night-cloud cross the forehead of morning. She was yellow-haired, almost purple-eyed, so rich

was the blue of the pupils. Vittoria could be sallow in despondency ; but this Violetta never failed in plumpness and freshness. The pencil which had given her aspect the one touch of discord, endowed it with a subtle harmony, like mystery ; and Ammiani remembered his having stood once on the Lido of Venice, and eyed the dawn across the Adriatic, and dreamed that Violetta was born of the loveliness and held in her bosom the hopes of morning. He dreamed of it now, feeling the smooth roll of a torrent.

A cry of "Arms !" rang down the length of the Corso.

He started to his feet thankfully.

"Take me to your mother," she said. "I loathe to hear firing and be alone."

Ammiani threw up the window. There was a stir of lamps and torches below, and the low sky hung red. Violetta stood quickly thick-shod and hooded.

"Your mother will admit my companionship, Carlo ?"

"She desires to thank you."

"She has no longer any fear of me ?"

"You will find her of one mind with you."

"Concerning the king !"

"I would say, on most subjects."

“But that you do not know my mind! You are modest. Confess that you are thinking the hour you have passed with me has been wasted.”

“I am, now I hear the call to arms.”

“If I had all the while entertained you with talk of your Vittoria! It would not have been wasted then, my amaranto. It is not wasted for me. If a shot should strike you——”

“Tell her I died loving her with all my soul!” cried Ammiani.

Violetta’s frame quivered as if he had smitten her.

They left the house. Countess Ammiani’s door was the length of a barricade distant: it swung open to them, like all the other house-doors which were, or wished to be esteemed, true to the cause, and hospitable towards patriots.

“Remember, when you need a refuge, my villa is on Lago Maggiore,” Violetta said, and kissed her finger-tips to him.

An hour afterwards, by the light of this unlucky little speech, he thought of her as a shameless coquette. “*When* I need a refuge? Is not Milan in arms?—Italy alive? She considers it all a passing epidemic; or, perhaps, she is to plead for me to the king!”

That set him thinking moodily over the things she

had uttered of Vittoria's strange and sudden devotion to the king.

Rainy dawn and the tongues of the churches ushered in the last day of street fighting. Ammiani found Romara and Colonel Corte at the head of strong bodies of volunteers, well-armed, ready to march for the Porta Tosa. All three went straight to the house where the Provisional Government sat, and sword in hand denounced Count Medole as a traitor who sold his country to the king. Corte dragged him to the window to hear the shouts for the Republic. Medole wrote their names down one by one, and said, "Shall I leave the date vacant?" They put themselves at the head of their men, and marched in the ringing of the bells. The bells were their sacro-military music. Barto Rizzo was off to make a spring at the Porta Ticinese. Students, peasants, noble youths of the best blood, old men and young women, stood ranged in the drenching rain, eager to face death for freedom. At midday the bells were answered by cannon and the blunt snap of musketry volleys; dull, savage responses, as of a wounded great beast giving short howls and snarls by the interminable over-roaring of a cataract. Messengers from the gates came running to the quiet centre of the city, where cool men discoursed and plotted. Great news, big lies, were

shouted :—Carlo Alberto thundered in the plains ; the Austrians were everywhere retiring ; the marshal was a prisoner ; the flag of surrender was on the citadel ! These things were for the ears of thirsty women, diplomatists, and cripples.

Countess Ammiani and Countess d'Isorella sat together throughout the agitation of the day.

The life prayed for by one seemed a wisp of straw flung on this humming furnace.

Countess Ammiani was too well used to defeat to believe readily in victory, and had shrouded her head in resignation too long to hope for what she craved. Her hands were joined softly in her lap. Her visage had the same unmoved expression when she conversed with Violetta as when she listened to the ravings of the Corso.

Darkness came, and the bells ceased not rolling by her open windows : the clouds were like mists of conflagration.

She would not have the windows closed. The noise of the city had become familiar and akin to the image of her boy. She sat there cloaked.

Her heart went like a time-piece to the two interrogations to Heaven : " Alive ?—or dead ? "

The voice of Luciano Romara was that of an angel's answering. He entered the room neat and

trim as a cavalier dressed for social evening duty, saying with his fine tact, "We are all well;" and after talking like a gazette of the Porta Tosa taken by the volunteers, Barto Rizzo's occupation of the gate opening towards the Ticino, and the bursting of the Porta Camosina by the freebands of the plains, he handed a letter to Countess Ammiani.

"Carlo is on the march to Bergamo and Brescia, with Corte, Sana, and about fifty of our men," he said.

"And is wounded—where?" asked Violetta.

"Slightly in the hand—you see, he can march," Romara said, laughing at her promptness to suspect a subterfuge, until he thought, "Now, what does this mean, madam?"

A lamp was brought to Countess Ammiani. She read:—

"MY MOTHER!

"Cotton-wool on the left fore-finger. They deigned to give me no other memorial of my first fight. I am not worthy of papa's two bullets. I march with Corte and Sana to Brescia. We keep the passes of the Tyrol. Luciano heads five hundred up to the hills to-morrow or next day. He must have all our money. Then go from door to door and beg sub-

scriptions. Yes, my chief! it is to be like God, and deserving of his gifts to lay down all pride, all wealth. This night send to my betrothed in Turin. She must be with no one but my mother. It is my command. Tell her so. I hold imperatively to it.

“I breathe the best air of life. Luciano is a fine leader in action, calm as in a ball-room. What did I feel? I will talk of it with you by-and-by;—my father whispered in my ears; I felt him at my right hand. He said, ‘I died for this day.’ I feel now that I must have seen him. This is imagination. We may say that anything is imagination. I certainly heard his voice. Be of good heart, my mother, for I can swear that the general wakes up when I strike Austrian steel. He loved Brescia; so I go there. God preserve my mother! The eyes of Heaven are wide enough to see us both. Vittoria by your side, remember! It is my will.

“CARLO.”

Countess Ammiani closed her eyes over the letter, as in a dead sleep. “He is more his father than himself, and so suddenly!” she said. She was tearless. Violetta helped her to her bed-room under the pretext of a desire to hear the contents of the letter.

That night, which ended the five days of battle in

Milan, while fires were raging at many gates, bells were rolling over the roof-tops, the army of Austria coiled along the north-eastern walls of the city, through rain and thick obscurity, and wove its way like a vast worm into the outer land.

CHAPTER XXXI.

EPISODES OF THE REVOLT AND THE WAR,

VITTORIA DISOBEYS HER LOVER.

COUNTESS D'ISORELLA'S peculiar mission to Milan was over with the victory of the city. She undertook personally to deliver Carlo's injunction to Vittoria on her way to the king. Countess Ammiani deemed it sufficient that her son's wishes should be repeated verbally; and as there appeared to be no better messenger than one who was bound for Turin and knew Vittoria's place of residence, she entrusted the duty to Violetta.

The much which hangs on little was then set in motion.

Violetta was crossing the Ticino when she met a Milanese nobleman who had received cold greeting from the king, and was returning to Milan with word that the Piedmontese declaration of war against

Austria had been signed. She went back to Milan, saw and heard, and gathered a burden for the royal ears. This was a woman, tender only to the recollection of past days, who used her beauty and her arts as weapons for influence. She liked kings because she saw neither master nor dupe in a republic; she liked her early lover because she could see nothing but a victim in any new one. She was fond of Carlo, as greatly occupied minds may be attached to an old garden where they have aforetime sown fair seed. Jealousy of a rival in love that was disconnected with political business, and her large expenditure, had never yet disturbed the lady's nerves.

At Turin she found Vittoria singing at the opera, and winning marked applause from the royal box. She thought sincerely that to tear a prima donna from her glory would be very much like dismissing a successful general to his home and gabbling family. A most eminent personage agreed with her. Vittoria was carelessly informed that Count Ammiani had gone to Brescia, and having regard for her safety, desired her to go to Milan to be under the protection of his mother, and that Countess Ammiani was willing to receive her.

Now, with her mother, and her maid Giacinta, and Beppo gathered about her, for three weeks Vittoria

had been in full operatic career, working, winning fame, believing that she was winning influence, and establishing a treasury. The presence of her lover in Milan would have called her to the noble city ; but he being at Brescia, she asked herself why she should abstain from labours which contributed materially to the strength of the revolution and made her helpful. It was doubtful whether Countess Ammiani would permit her to sing at La Scala ; or whether the city could support an opera in the throes of war. And Vittoria was sending money to Milan. The stipend paid to her by the impresario, the jewels, the big bouquets—all flowed into the treasury of the insurrection. Antonio-Pericles advanced her a large sum on the day when the news of the Milanese uprising reached Turin : the conditions of the loan had simply been that she should continue her engagement to sing in Turin. He was perfectly slavish to her, and might be trusted to advance more. Since the great night at La Scala, she had been often depressed by a secret feeling that there was divorce between her love of her country and devotion to her art. Now that both passions were in union, both active, each aiding the fire of the other, she lived a consummate life. She could not have abandoned her path instantly though Carlo had spoken his command to her

in person. Such were her first spontaneous reasonings, and Laura Piaveni seconded them ; saying, “ Money, money ! we must be Jews for money. We women are not allowed to fight, but we can manage to contribute our *lire* and *soldi* ; we can forge the sinews of war.”

Vittoria wrote respectfully to Countess Ammiani stating why she declined to leave Turin. The letter was poorly worded. While writing it she had been taken by a sentiment of guilt and of isolation in presuming to disobey her lover. “ I am glad he will not see it,” she remarked to Laura, who looked rapidly across the lines, and said nothing. Praise of the king was in the last sentence. Laura’s eyes lingered on it half-a-minute.

“ Has he not drawn his sword ? He is going to march,” said Vittoria.

“ Oh, yes,” Laura replied coolly ; “ but you put that to please Countess Ammiani.”

Vittoria confessed she had not written it purposely to defend the king. “ What harm ?” she asked.

“ None. Only this playing with shades allows men to call us hypocrites.”

The observation angered Vittoria. She had seen the king of late ; she had breathed Turin incense and its atmosphere ; much that could be pleaded on the

king's behalf she had listened to with the sympathetic pity which can be a woman's best judgment, and is the sentiment of reason. She had also brooded over the king's character, and had thought that if the chief could have her opportunities for studying this little impressible, yet strangely impulsive royal nature, his severe condemnation of him would be tempered. In fact, she was doing what makes a woman excessively tender and opinionated;—she was petting her idea of the misunderstood one: she was thinking that she divined the king's character by mystical intuition; I will dare to say, maternally apprehended it. And it was a character strangely open to feminine perceptions, while to masculine comprehension it remained a dead blank, done either in black or in white.

Vittoria insisted on praising the king to Laura.

"With all my heart," Laura said, "so long as he is true to Italy."

"How, then, am I hypocritical?"

"My Sandra, you are certainly perverse. You admitted that you did something for the sake of pleasing Countess Ammiani."

"I did. But to be hypocritical one must be false."

"Oh!" went Laura.

“And I write to Carlo. He does not care for the king; therefore it is needless for me to name the king to him; and I shall not.”

Laura said, “Very well.” She saw a little deeper than the perversity, though she did not see the springs. In Vittoria’s letter to her lover, she made no allusion to the Sword of Italy.

Countess Ammiani forwarded both letters on to Brescia.

When Carlo had finished reading them, he heard all Brescia clamouring indignantly at the king for having disarmed volunteers on Lago Maggiore and elsewhere in his dominions. Milan was sending word by every post of the overbearing arrogance of the Piedmontese officers and officials, who claimed a prostrate submission from a city fresh with the ardour of the glory it had won for itself, and that would fain have welcomed them as brothers. Romara and others wrote of downright visible betrayal. It was a time of passions:—great readiness towards generosity, equal promptitude for indiscriminating hatred. Carlo read Vittoria’s praise of the king with insufferable anguish. “You—you, part of me, can write like this!” he struck the paper vehemently. The fury of action transformed the gentle youth. Countess Ammiani would not have forwarded the letter ad-

dressed to herself had she dreamed the mischief it might do. Carlo saw double-dealing in the absence of any mention of the king in his own letter.

“Quit Turin at once,” he dashed hasty lines to Vittoria; “and no ‘Viva il Re’ till we know what he may merit. Old delusions are pardonable; but you must now look abroad with your eyes. Your words should be the echoes of my soul. Your acts are mine. For the sake of the country, do nothing to fill me with shame. The king is a traitor. I remember things said of him by Agostino; I subscribe to them every one. Were you like any other Italian girl, you might cry for him—who would care! But you are Vittoria. Fly to my mother’s arms, and there rest. The king betrays us. Is a stronger word necessary? I am writing too harshly to you;—and here are the lines of your beloved letter throbbing round me while I write; but till the last shot is fired I try to be iron, and would hold your hand and not kiss it—not be mad to fall between your arms—not wish for you—not think of you as a woman, as my beloved, as my Vittoria; I hope and pray not, if I thought there was an ace of work left to do for the country. Or if one could say that you cherished a shred of loyalty for him who betrays it. Great heaven! am I to imagine that royal flatteries——My

hand is not my own! You shall see all that it writes. I will seem to you no better than I am. I do not tell you to be a Republican, but an Italian. If I had room for myself in my prayers—oh! one half-instant to look on you, though with chains on my limbs. The sky and the solid ground break up when I think of you. I fancy I am still in prison. Angelo was music to me for two whole days (without a morning to the first and a night to the second). He will be here to-morrow and talk of you again. I long for him more than for battle—almost long for you more than for victory for our Italy.

“This is Brescia, which my father said he loved better than his wife.

“General Paolo Ammiani is buried here. I was at his tombstone this morning. I wish you had known him.

“You remember, we talked of his fencing with me daily. ‘*I love the fathers who do that.*’ You said it. He will love you. Death is the shadow—not life. I went to his tomb. It was more to think of Brescia than of him. Ashes are only ashes; tombs are poor places. My soul is the power.

“If I saw the Monte Viso this morning, I saw right over your head when you were sleeping.

“Farewell to journalism—I hope, for ever. I jump

at shaking off the journalistic phraseology Agostino laughs at. Yet I was right in printing my 'young nonsense.' I did hold the truth, and that was felt, though my vehicle for delivering it was rubbish.

"In two days Corte promises to sing his song, 'Avanti.' I am at his left hand. Venice, the passes of the Adige, the Adda, the Oglio are ours. The room is locked; we have only to exterminate the reptiles inside it. Romara, D'Arci, Carnischi march to hold the doors. Corte will push lower; and if I can get him to enter the plains and join the main army I shall rejoice."

The letter concluded with a postscript that half an Italian regiment, with white coats swinging on their bayonet-points, had just come in.

It reached Vittoria at a critical moment.

Two days previously, she and Laura Piaveni had talked with the king. It was an unexpected honour. Countess d'Isorella conducted them to the palace. The lean-headed sovereign sat booted and spurred, his sword across his knees; he spoke with a peculiar sad hopefulness of the prospects of the campaign, making it clear that he was risking more than any one risked, for his stake was a crown. The few words he uttered of Italy had a golden ring in them; Vittoria knew not why they had it. He condemned

the republican spirit of Milan more regretfully than severely. The Republicans were, he said, impracticable. Beyond the desire for change, they knew not what they wanted. He did not state that he should avoid Milan in his march. On the contrary, he seemed to indicate that he was about to present himself to the people of Milan. "To act against the enemy successfully, we must act as one, under one head, with one aim." He said this, adding that no heart in Italy had yearned more than his own for the signal to march for the Mincio and the Adige.

Vittoria determined to put him to one test. She summoned her boldness to crave grace for Agostino Balderini to return to Piedmont. The petition was immediately granted. Alluding to the libretto of *Camilla*, the king complimented Vittoria for her high courage on the night of the Fifteenth of the foregoing year. "We in Turin were prepared, though we had only then the pleasure of hearing *of* you," he said.

"I strove to do my best to help. I wish to serve our cause now," she replied, feeling an inexplicable new sweetness running in her blood.

He asked her if she did not know that she had the power to move multitudes.

"Sire, singing appears so poor a thing in time of war."

He remarked that wine was good for soldiers, singing better, such a voice as hers best of all.

For hours after the interview, Vittoria struggled with her deep blushes. She heard the drums of the regiments, the clatter of horses, the bugle-call of assembly, as so many confirmatory notes that it was a royal hero who was going forth.

"He stakes a crown," she said to Laura.

"Tush! it tumbles off his head if he refuses to venture something," was Laura's response.

Vittoria reproached her for injustice.

"No," Laura said; "he is like a young man for whom his mother has made a match. And he would be very much in love with his bride if he were quite certain of winning her, or rather, if she would come a little more than half-way to meet him. Some young men are so composed. Genoa and Turin say, 'Go and try.' Milan and Venice say, 'Come and have faith in us.' My opinion is that he is quite as much propelled as attracted."

"This is shameful," said Vittoria.

"No; for I am quite willing to suspend my judgment. I pray that fortune may bless his arms. I do think that the stir of a campaign,

and a certain amount of success will make him in earnest."

"Can you look on his face and not see pure enthusiasm?"

"I see every feminine quality in it, my dear."

"What can it be that he is wanting in?"

"Masculine ambition."

"I am not defending him," said Vittoria hastily.

"Not at all; and I am not attacking him. I can excuse his dread of republicanism. I can fancy that there is reason for him just now to fear republicanism worse than Austria. Paris and Milan are two grisly phantoms before him. These red spectres are born of earthquake, and are more given to shaking thrones than are hostile cannon-shot. Earthquakes are dreadfuller than common maladies to all of us. Fortune may help him, but he has not the look of one who commands her. The face is not aquiline. There's a light over him like the ray of a sickly star."

"For that reason!" Vittoria burst out.

"Oh, for that reason we pity men, assuredly, my Sandra, but not kings. Luckless kings are not generous men, and ungenerous men are mischievous kings."

"But if you find him chivalrous and devoted; if he proves his noble intentions, why not support him?"

“Dandle a puppet by all means,” said Laura.

Her intellect, not her heart, was harsh to the king ; and her heart was not mistress of her intellect in this respect, because she beheld riding forth at the head of Italy one whose spirit was too much after the pattern of her supple, springing, cowering, impressionable sex, alternately ardent and abject, chivalrous and treacherous, and not to be confided in firmly when standing at the head of a great cause.

Aware that she was reading him very strictly by the letters of his past deeds, which were not plain history to Vittoria, she declared that she did not countenance suspicion in dealing with the king, and that it would be a delight to her to hear of his gallant bearing on the battle-field. “Or to witness it, my Sandra, if that were possible ;—we two ! For, should he prove to be no general, he has the courage of his family.”

Vittoria took fire at this. “What hinders our following the army ?”

“The less baggage the better, my dear.”

“But the king said that my singing—I have no right to think it myself.” Vittoria concluded her sentence with a comical intention of humility.

“It was a pretty compliment,” said Laura. “You replied that singing is a poor thing in time of war,

and I agree with you. We might serve as hospital nurses."

"Why do we not determine?"

"We are only considering possibilities."

"Consider the impossibility of our remaining quiet."

"Fire that goes to flame is a waste of heat, my Sandra."

The signora, however, was not so discreet as her speech. On all sides there was uproar and movement. High-born Italian ladies were offering their hands for any serviceable work. Laura and Vittoria were not alone in the desire which was growing to be resolution to share the hardships of the soldiers, to cherish and encourage them, and by seeing, to have the supreme joy of feeling the blows struck at the common enemy.

The opera closed when the king marched. Carlo Ammiani's letter was handed to Vittoria at the fall of the curtain on the last night.

Three paths were open to her: either that she should obey her lover, or earn an immense sum of money from Antonio-Pericles by accepting an immediate engagement in London, or go to the war. To sit in submissive obedience seemed unreasonable; to fly from Italy impossible. Yet the latter alternative

appealed strongly to her sense of duty, and as it thereby threw her lover's commands into the background, she left it to her heart to struggle with Carlo, and thought over the two final propositions. The idea of being apart from Italy while the living country streamed forth to battle struck her inflamed spirit like the shock of a pause in martial music. Laura pretended to take no part in Vittoria's decision, but when it was reached, she showed her a travelling-carriage stocked with lint and linen, wine in jars, chocolate, cases of brandy, tea, coffee, needles, thread, twine, scissors, knives; saying, as she displayed them, "There, my dear, *all* my money has gone in that equipment, so you must pay on the road."

"This doesn't leave me a choice, then," said Vittoria, joining her humour.

"Ah, but think over it," Laura suggested.

"No! not think at all," cried Vittoria.

"You do not fear Carlo's anger?"

"If I think, I am weak as water. Let us go."

Countess d'Isorella wrote to Carlo: "Your Vittoria is away after the king to Pavia. They tell me she stood up in her carriage on the Ponte del Po—'Viva il Re d'Italia!'—waving the cross of Savoy. As I have previously assured you, no woman is Republican. The demonstration was a mistake. Public characters

should not let their personal preferences be trumpeted: a diplomatic truism:—but I must add, least of all a cantatrice for a king. The famous Greek amateur—the prop of failing finances—is after her to arrest her for breach of engagement. You wished to discover an independent mind in a woman, my Carlo; did you not? One would suppose her your wife—or widow. She looked a superb thing the last night she sang. She is not, in my opinion, wanting in height. If, behind all that innocence and candour, she has any trained artfulness, she will beat us all. Heaven bless your arms!”

The demonstration mentioned by the countess did not occur.

Vittoria's letter to her lover missed him. She wrote from Pavia, after she had taken her decisive step.

Carlo Ammiani went into the business of the war with the belief that his betrothed had despised his prayer to her.

He was under Colonel Corte, operating on the sub-Alpine range of hills along the line of the Chiese south-eastward. Here the volunteers, formed of the best blood of Milan, the gay and brave young men, after marching in the pride of their strength to hold the Alpine passes and bar Austria from Italy while

the fight went on below, were struck by a sudden paralysis. They hung aloft there like an arm cleft from the body. Weapons, clothes, provisions, money, the implements of war, were withheld from them. The Piedmontese officers despatched to watch their proceedings laughed at them like exasperating senior scholars examining the accomplishments of a lower form. It was manifest that Count Medole and the Government of Milan worked everywhere to conquer the people for the king before the king had done a stroke to conquer the Austrians for the people; while, in order to reduce them to the condition of Piedmontese soldiery, the flame of their patriotic enthusiasm was systematically damped, and instead of apprentices in war, who possessed at any rate the elementary stuff of soldiers, miserable dummies were drafted into the royal service. The Tuscans and the Romans had good reason to complain on behalf of their princes, as had the Venetians and the Lombards for the cause of their republic. Neither Tuscans, Romans, Venetians, nor Lombards, were offering up their lives simply to obtain a change of rulers; though all Italy was ready to bow in allegiance to a king of proved kingly quality. Early in the campaign the cry of treason was muttered, and on all sides such became the temper of the Alpine

volunteers, that Angelo and Rinaldo Guidascari were forced to join their cousin under Corte, by the dispersion of their band, amounting to something more than eighteen hundred fighting lads, whom a Piedmontese superior officer summoned peremptorily to shout for the king. They thundered as one voice for the Italian Republic, and instantly broke up and disbanded. This was the folly of the young: Carlo Ammiani confessed that it was no better; but he knew that a breath of generous confidence from the self-appointed champion of the national cause would have subdued his impatience at royalty and given heart and cheer to his sickening comrades. He began to frown angrily when he thought of Vittoria. "Where is she now?—where now?" he asked himself in the season of his most violent wrath at the king. Her conduct grew inseparable in his mind from the king's deeds. The sufferings, the fierce irony, the very deaths of the men surrounding him in arms, rose up in accusation against the woman he loved.

CHAPTER XXXII.

EPISODES OF THE REVOLT AND THE WAR.

THE TREACHERY OF PERICLES.—THE WHITE UMBRELLA.

THE DEATH OF RINALDO GUIDASCARPI.

THE king crossed the Mincio. The marshal, threatened on his left flank, drew in his line from the farther Veronese heights upon a narrowed battle front before Verona. Here they manœuvred, and the opening successes fell to the king. Holding Peschiera begirt, with one sharp passage of arms he cleared the right bank of the Adige and stood on the semicircle of hills, master of the main artery into Tyrol.

The village of Pastrengo has given its name to the day. It was a day of intense heat coming after heavy rains. The arid soil steamed; the white powder-smoke curled in long horizontal columns across the hazy ring of the fight. Seen from a dis-

tance it was like a huge downy ball, kicked this way and that between the cypresses by invisible giants. A pair of eager-eyed women gazing on a battlefield for the first time could but ask themselves in bewilderment whether the fate of countries were verily settled in such a fashion. Far in the rear, Vittoria and Laura heard the cannon-shots; a sullen, dull sound, as of a mallet striking upon rotten timber. They drove at speed. The great thumps became varied by musketry volleys, that were like blocks of rock-boulder tumbled in the roll of a mountain torrent. These, then, were the voices of Italy and Austria speaking the devilish tongue of the final alternative. Cannon, rockets, musketry, and now the run of drums, now the ring of bugles, now the tramp of horses, and the field was like a landslip. A joyful, bright black death-wine seemed to pour from the bugles all about. The women strained their senses to hear and see; they could realize nothing of a reality so absolute; their feelings were shattered, and crowded over them in patches;—horror, glory, panic, hope, shifted lights within their bosoms. The fascination and repulsion of the image of Force divided them. They feared; they were prostrate; they sprang in praise. The image of Force was god and devil to their souls. They strove

to understand why the field was marked with blocks of men who made a plume of vapour here, and hurried thither. The action of their intellects resolved to a blank marvel at seeing an imminent thing—an interrogation to almighty Heaven—treated with method, not with fury streaming forward. Cleave the opposing ranks! Cry to God for fire! Cut them through! They had come to see the Song of Deborah performed before their eyes, and they witnessed only a battle. Blocks of infantry gathered densely, thinned to a line, wheeled in column, marched: blocks of cavalry changed posts: artillery bellowed from one spot and quickly selected another. Infantry advanced in the wake of tiny smoke-puffs, halted, advanced again, rattled files of shots, became struck into knots, faced half about as from a blow of the back of a hand, retired orderly. Cavalry curved like a flickering scimitar in their rear; artillery plodded to its further station. Innumerable tiny smoke-puffs then preceded a fresh advance of infantry. The enemy were on the hills and looked mightier, for they were revealed among red flashes of their guns, and stood partly visible above clouds of hostile smoke and through clouds of their own, which grasped viscously by the skirts of the hills. Yet it seemed a strife of insects, until, one by one, soldiers

who had gone into yonder white pit for the bloody kiss of death, and had got it on their faces, were borne by. Vittoria and Laura knelt in this horrid stream of mortal anguish to give succour from their stores in the carriage. Their natural emotions were distraught. They welcomed the sight of suffering thankfully, for the poor blotted faces were so glad at sight of them. Torture was their key to the reading of the battle. They gazed on the field no longer, but let the roaring wave of combat wash up to them what it would.

The hill behind Pastrengo was twice stormed. When the bluecoats first fell back, a fine charge of Piedmontese horse cleared the slopes for a second effort, and they went up and on, driving the enemy from hill to hill. The Adige was crossed by the Austrians under cover of Tyrolese rifle-shots.

Then, with Beppo at their heels, bearing water, wine, and brandy, the women walked in the paths of carnage, and saw the many faces of death. Laura whispered strangely, "How light-hearted they look!" The wounded called their comforters sweet names. Some smoked and some sang, some groaned; all were quick to drink. Their jokes at the dead were universal. They twisted their bodies painfully to stick a cigar between dead lips, and besprinkle them

with the last drops of liquor in their cups, laughing a benediction. These scenes put grievous chains on Vittoria's spirit, but Laura evidently was not the heavier for them. Glorious Verona shone under the sunset as their own to come; Peschiera, on the blue lake, was in the hollow of their hands. "Prizes worth any quantity of blood," said Laura. Vittoria confessed that she had seen enough of blood, and her aspect provoked Laura to utter, "For God's sake, think of something miserable;—cry, if you can!"

Vittoria's under lip dropped sickly with the question, "Why?"

Laura stated the physical necessity with Italian naïveté.

"If I can," said Vittoria, and blinked to get a tear; but laughter helped as well to relieve her, and it came on their return to the carriage. They found the spy Luigi sitting beside the driver. He informed them that Antonio-Pericles had been in the track of the army ever since their flight from Turin; daily hurrying off with whip of horses at the sound of cannon-shot, and gradually stealing back to the extreme rear. This day he had flown from Oliosi to Cavriana, and was, perhaps, retracing his way already as before, on fearful toe-tips. Luigi acted the caution of one who stepped blind-folded across hot iron

plates. Vittoria, without a spark of interest, asked why the Signor Antonio should be following the army.

“Why, it’s to find *you*, signorina.”

Luigi’s comical emphasis conjured up in a jumbled picture the devotion, the fury, the zeal, the terror of Antonio-Pericles—a mixture of demoniacal energy and ludicrous trepidation. She imagined his long figure, fantastical as a shadow, off at huge strides, and back, with eyes sliding swiftly to the temples, and his odd serpent’s head raised to peer across the plains, and occasionally to exclaim to the reasonable heavens in anger at men and loathing of her. She laughed ungovernably. Luigi exclaimed that, albeit in disgrace with the signor Antonio, he had been sent for to serve him afresh, and had now been sent forward to entreat the gracious signorina to grant her sincerest friend and adorer an interview. She laughed at Pericles, but in truth she almost loved the man for his worship of her art, and representation of her dear peaceful practice of it.

The interview between them took place at Oliosi. There, also, she met Georgiana Ford, the half-sister of Merthyr Powys, who told her that Merthyr and Augustus Gambier were in the ranks of a volunteer contingent in the king’s army, and might have been

present at Pastrengo. Georgiana held aloof from battle-fields, her business being simply to serve as Merthyr's nurse in case of wounds, or to see the last of him in case of death. She appeared to have no enthusiasm. She seconded strongly the vehement persuasions addressed by Pericles to Vittoria. Her disapproval of the presence of her sex on fields of battle was precise. Pericles had followed the army to give Vittoria one last chance, he said, and drag her away from this sick country, as he called it, pointing at the dusty land from the windows of the inn. On first seeing her he gasped like one who has recovered a lost thing. To Laura he was a fool; but Vittoria enjoyed his wildest outbursts, and her half-sincere humility encouraged him to think that he had captured her at last. He enlarged on the perils surrounding her voice in dusty bellowing Lombardy, and on the ardour of his friendship in exposing himself to perils as tremendous that he might rescue her. While speaking he pricked a lively ear for the noise of guns, hearing a gun in everything, and jumping to the window with horrid imprecations. His carriage was horsed at the doors below. Let the horses die, he said; let the coachman have sun-stroke. Let hundreds perish, if Vittoria would only start in an hour—in two—to-night—to-morrow. "Be-

cause, do you see,"—he turned to Laura and Georgiana, submitting to the vexatious necessity of seeming reasonable to these creatures,—“she is a casket for one pearl. It is only one, but it is ONE, mon Dieu! and inscrutable Heaven, mesdames, has made the holder of it mad. Her voice has but a sole skin; it is not like a body; it bleeds to death at a scratch. A spot on the pearl, and it is perished—pfoof! Ah, cruel thing! impious, I say. I have watched, I have reared her. Speak to me of mothers! I have cherished her for her splendid destiny—to see it go down, heels up, among quarrels of boobies! Yes; we have war in Italy. Fight! Fight in this beautiful climate that you may be dominated by a blue coat, not by a white coat. We are an intelligent race; we are a civilized people; we will fight for that. What has a voice of the very heavens to do with your fighting? I heard it first in England, in a fir-wood, in the month of May, at night-time, fifteen miles and a quarter from the city of London—oh, city of peace! Sandra—you will come there. I give you thousands additional to the sum stipulated. You have no rival. Sandra Belloni! no rival, I say”—he invoked her in English,—“and you here—you, to be a draggle-tail vivandière wiz a brandy-bottle at your hips and a reputation going like ze brandy.

Ah ! pardon, mesdames ; but did mankind ever see a frenzy like this girl's ? Speak, Sandra. I could cry it like Michiella to Camilla—Speak ! ”

Vittoria compelled him to despatch his horses to stables. He had relays of horses at war-prices between Castiglione and Pavia, and a retinue of servants ; nor did he hesitate to inform the ladies that, before entrusting his person to the hazards of war, he had taken care to be provided with safe-conduct passes for both armies, as befitted a prudent man of peace—“ or sense ; it is one, mesdames.”

Notwithstanding his terror at the guns, and disgust at the soldiery and the bad fare at the inn, Vittoria's presence kept him lingering in this wretched place, though he cried continually, “ I shall have heart disease.” He believed at first that he should subdue her ; then it became his intention to carry her off.

It was to see Merthyr that she remained. Merthyr came there the day after the engagement at Santa Lucia. They had not met since the days at Meran. He was bronzed, and keen with strife, and looked young, but spoke not over-hopefully. He scolded her for wishing to taste battle, and compared her to a bad swimmer on deep shores. Pericles bounded with delight to hear him, and said he had not supposed there was so much sense in Powys. Merthyr

confessed that the Austrians had as good as beaten them at Santa Lucia. The tactical combinations of the Piedmontese were wretched. He was enamoured of the gallantry of the Duke of Savoy, who had saved the right wing of the army from rout while covering the backward movement. Why there had been any fight at all at Santa Lucia, where nothing was to be gained, much to be lost, he was incapable of telling; but attributed it to an antique chivalry on the part of the king, that had prompted the hero to a trial of strength, a bout of blood-letting.

“You do think he is a hero?” said Vittoria.

“He is; and he will march to Venice.”

“And open the opera at Venice,” Pericles sneered. “Powys, mon cher, cure her of this beastly dream. It is a scandal to you to want a woman’s help. You were defeated at Santa Lucia. I say bravo to anything that brings you to reason. Bravo! You hear me.”

The engagement at Santa Lucia was designed by the king to serve as an instigating signal for the Veronese to rise in revolt; and this was the secret of Charles Albert’s stultifying manœuvres between Peschiera and Mantua. Instead of matching his military skill against the wary old marshal’s, he was offering incentives to conspiracy. Distrusting the

revolution, which was a force behind him, he placed such reliance on its efforts in his front as to make it the pivot of his actions.

“The volunteers north-east of Vicenza are doing the real work for us, I believe,” said Merthyr ; and it seemed so then, as it might have been indeed, had they not been left almost entirely to themselves to do it.

These tidings of a fight lost set Laura and Vittoria quivering with nervous irritation. They had been on the field of Pastrengo, and it was won. They had been absent from Santa Lucia. What was the deduction ? Not such as reason would have made for them ; but they were at the mercy of the currents of the blood. “Let us go on,” said Laura. Merthyr refused to convoy them. Pericles drove with him an hour on the road, and returned in glee, to find Vittoria and Laura seated in their carriage, and Luigi scuffling with Beppo.

“Padrone, see how I assist you,” cried Luigi.

Upon this Beppo instantly made a swan’s neck of his body, and trumpeted : “A sally from the fortress for forage.”

“Whip ! whip !” Pericles shouted to his coachman, and the two carriages parted company at the top of their speed.

Pericles fell a victim to a regiment of bersaglieri that wanted horses, and unceremoniously stopped his pair and took possession of them on the route for Peschiera. He was left in a stranded carriage between a dusty ditch and a mulberry bough. Vittoria and Laura were not much luckier. They were met by a band of deserters, who made no claim upon the horses, but stood for drink, and having therewith fortified their fine opinion of themselves, petitioned for money. A kiss was their next demand. Money and good humour saved the women from indignity. The band of rascals went off with a 'Viva l'Italia.' Such scum is upon every popular rising, as Vittoria had to learn. Days of rain and an incomprehensible inactivity of the royal army kept her at a miserable inn, where the walls were bare; the cock had crowed his last. The guns of Peschiera seemed to roam over the plain like an echo unwillingly aroused that seeks a hollow for its further sleep. Laura sat pondering for hours, harsh in manner, as if she hated her. "I think," she said once, "that women are those persons who have done evil in another world." The "why?" from Vittoria was uttered simply to awaken friendly talk, but Laura relapsed into her gloom. A village priest, a sleek gentle creature, who shook his head to earth when he hoped, and filled his nostrils with

snuff when he desponded, gave them occasional companionship under the title of consolation. He wished the Austrians to be beaten, remarking, however, that they were good Catholics, most fervent Catholics. As the Lord decided, so it would end! "Oh, delicious creed!" Laura broke out! "Oh, dear and sweet doctrine! that results and developments in a world where there is more evil than good are approved by Heaven." She twisted the mild man in supple steel of her irony so tenderly that Vittoria marvelled to hear her speak of him in abhorrence when they quitted the village. "Not to be born a woman, and voluntarily to be a woman!" ejaculated Laura. "How many, how many are we to deduct from the male population of Italy? Cross in hand, he should be at the head of our arms, not whimpering in a corner for white bread. Wretch! he makes the marrow in my bones rage at him. He chronicled a pig that squeaked."

Why had she been so gentle with him?

"Because, my dear, when I loathe a thing I never care to exhaust my detestation before I can strike it," said the true Italian.

They were on the field of Goito; it was won. It was won against odds. At Pastrengo they witnessed an encounter; this was a battle. Vittoria perceived

that there was the difference between a symphony and a lyric song. The blessedness of the sensation that death can be light and easy dispossessed her of the meaner compassion, half made up of cowardice, which she had been nearly borne down by on the field of Pastrengo. At an angle on a height off the left wing of the royal army the face of the battle was plain to her; the movements of the troops were clear as strokes on a slate. Laura flung her life into her eyes, and knelt and watched, without summing one sole thing from what her senses received.

Vittoria said, "We are too far away to understand it."

"No," said Laura, "we are too far away to *feel* it."

The savage soul of the woman was robbed of its share of tragic emotion by having to hold so far aloof. Flashes of guns were but flashes of guns up there where she knelt. She thirsted to read the things written by them; thirsted for their mystic terrors, somewhat as souls of great prophets have craved for the full revelation of those fitful underlights which inspired their mouths.

Charles Albert's star was at its highest when the Piedmontese drums beat for an advance of the whole line at Goito.

Laura stood up, white as furnace-fire. "Women

can do some good by praying," she said. She believed that she had been praying. That was her part in the victory.

Rain fell as from the forehead of thunder. From black eve to black dawn the women were among dead and dying men, where the lanterns trailed a slow flame across faces that took the light and let it go. They returned to their carriage exhausted. The ways were almost impassable for carriage-wheels. While they were toiling on and exchanging their drenched clothes, Vittoria heard Merthyr's voice speaking to Beppo on the box. He was saying that Captain Gambier lay badly wounded; brandy was wanted for him. She flung a cloak over Laura, and handed out the flask with a naked arm. It was not till she saw him again that she remembered or even felt that he had kissed the arm. A spot of sweet fire burned on it just where the soft fulness of a woman's arm slopes to the bend. He chid her for being on the field and rejoiced in a breath, for the carriage and its contents helped to rescue his wounded brother in arms from probable death. Gambier, wounded in thigh and ankle by rifle-shot, was placed in the carriage. His clothes were saturated with the soil of Goito; but wounded and wet, he smiled gaily, and talked sweet boyish English. Merthyr gave the

driver directions to wind along up the Mincio. "Georgiana will be at the nearest village—she has an instinct for battle-fields, or keeps spies in her pay," he said. "Tell her I am safe. We march to cut them (the enemy) off from Verona, and I can't leave. The game is in our hands. We shall give you Venice."

Georgiana was found at the nearest village. Gambier's wounds had been dressed by an army-surgeon. She looked at the dressing, and said that it would do for six hours. This singular person had fully qualified herself to attend on a soldier-brother. She had studied medicine for that purpose, and she had served as nurse in a London hospital. Her nerves were completely under control. She could sit in attendance by a sick-bed for hours, hearing distant cannon, and the brawl of soldiery and vagabonds in the street, without a change of countenance. Her dress was plain black from throat to heel, with a skull cap of white, like a Moravian sister. Vittoria revered her; but Georgiana's manner in return was cold aversion, so much more scornful than disdain that it offended Laura, who promptly put her finger on the blot in the fair character with the word 'Jealousy;' but a single word is too broad a mark to be exactly true. "She is a perfect example of your English," Laura said. "Brave, good, devoted,

admirable—ice to the heart. The judge of others, of course. I always respected her; I never liked her; and I should be afraid of a comparison with her. Her management of the household of this inn is extraordinary.”

Georgiana condescended to advise Vittoria once more not to dangle after armies.

“I wish to wait here to assist you in nursing our friend,” said Vittoria.

Georgiana replied that her strength was unlikely to fail.

After two days of incessant rain, sunshine blazed over the watery Mantuan flats. Laura drove with Beppo to see whether the army was in motion, for they were distracted by rumours. Vittoria clung to her wounded friend, whose pleasure was the hearing her speak. She expected Laura’s return by set of sun. After dark a messenger came to her, saying that the signora had sent a carriage to fetch her to Valeggio. Her immediate supposition was that Merthyr might have fallen. She found Luigi at the carriage-door, and listened to his mysterious directions and remarks that not a minute must be lost, without suspicion. He said that the signora was in great trouble, very anxious to see the signorina instantly; there was but a distance of five miles to traverse.

She thought it strange that the carriage should be so luxuriously fitted with lights and silken pillows, but her ideas were all of Merthyr, until she by chance discovered a packet marked '*chocolate*,' which told her at once that she was entrapped by Antonio-Pericles. Luigi would not answer her cry to him. After some fruitless tremblings of wrath, she lay back relieved by the feeling that Merthyr was safe, come what might come to herself. Things could lead to nothing but an altercation with Pericles, and for this scene she prepared her mind. The carriage stopped while she was dozing. Too proud to supplicate in the darkness, she left it to the horses to bear her on, reserving her energies for the morning's interview, and saying, "The farther he takes me the angrier I shall be." She dreamed of her anger while asleep, but awakened so frequently during the night that morning was at her eyelids before they divided. To her amazement she saw the carriage surrounded by Austrian troopers. Pericles was spreading cigars among them, and addressing them affably. The carriage was on a good road, between irrigated flats, that flashed a lively green and bright steel blue for miles away. She drew down the blinds to cry at leisure; her wings were clipped, and she lost heart. Pericles came round to her when the carriage had

drawn up at an inn. He was egregiously polite, but modestly kept back any expressions of triumph. A body of Austrians, cavalry and infantry, were breaking camp. Pericles accorded her an hour of rest. She perceived that he was anticipating an outbreak of the anger she had nursed overnight, and baffled him so far by keeping dumb. Luigi was sent up to her to announce the expiration of her hour of grace. "Ah, Luigi!" she said. "Signorina, only wait, and see how Luigi can serve two," he whispered, writhing under the reproachfulness of her eyes. At the carriage door she asked Pericles whither he was taking her. "Not to Turin, not to London, Sandra Belloni!" he replied; "not to a place where you are wet all night long, to wheeze for ever after it. Go in." She entered the carriage quickly, to escape from staring officers, whose laughter rang in her ears and humbled her bitterly; she felt herself bringing dishonour on her lover. The carriage continued in the track of the Austrians. Pericles was audibly careful to avoid the border regiments. He showered cigars as he passed; now and then he exhibited a paper; and on one occasion he brought a general officer to the carriage-door, opened it and pointed in. A white helmeted-dragoon rode on each side of the carriage for the remainder of the day. The delight of the

supposition that these Austrians were retreating before the invincible arms of King Carlo Alberto kept her cheerful; but she heard no guns in the rear. A blocking of artillery and waggons compelled a halt, and then Pericles came and faced her. He looked profoundly ashamed of himself, ready as he was for an animated defence of his proceedings.

"Where are you taking me, sir?" she said in English.

"Sandra, will you be a good child? It is anywhere you please, if you will promise——"

"I will promise nothing."

"Zen, I lock you up in Verona."

"In Verona!"

"Sandra, will you promise to me?"

"I will promise nothing."

"Zen I lock you up in Verona. It is settled. No more of it. I come to say, we shall not reach a village. I am sorry. We have soldiers for a guard. You draw out a board and lodge in your carriage as in a bed. Biscuits, potted meats, prunes, bon-bons, chocolate, wine—you shall find all at your right hand and your left. I am desolate in offending you. Sandra, if you will promise——"

"I will promise—this is what I will promise," said Vittoria.

Pericles thrust his ear forward, and withdrew it as if it had been slapped.

She promised to run from him at the first opportunity, to despise him ever after, and never to sing again in his hearing. With the darkness Luigi appeared to light her lamp; he mouthed perpetually, "To-morrow, to-morrow." The watch-fires of Austrians encamped in the fields encircled her; and moving up and down, the cigar of Antonio-Pericles was visible. He had not eaten or drunk, and he was out there sleepless; he walked conquering his fears in the thick of war troubles: all for her sake. She watched critically to see whether the cigar-light was puffed in fretfulness. It burned steadily; and the thought of Pericles supporting patience quite overcame her. In a fit of humour that was almost tears, she called to him and begged him to take a place in the carriage and have food. "If it is your pleasure," he said; and threw off his cloak. The wine comforted him. Thereupon he commenced a series of strange gesticulations, and ended by blinking at the window, saying, "No, no; it is impossible to explain. I have no voice; I am not gifted. It is," he tapped at his chest, "it is here. It is imprisoned in me."

"What?" said Vittoria, to encourage him.

"It can never be explained, my child. Am I not

respectful to you? Am I not worshipful to you? But, no! it can never be explained. Some do call me mad. I know it; I am laughed at. Oh! do I not know zat? Perfectly well. My ancestors adored goddesses. I discover ze voice of a goddess: I adore it. So you call me mad; it is to me—what you call me—juste ze same. I am possessed wiz passion for her voice. So it will be till I go to ashes. It is to me ze one zsing divine in a pig, a porpoise world. It is to me—I talk! It is unutterable—impossible to tell.”

“But I understand it; I know you must feel it,” said Vittoria.

“But you hate me, Sandra. You hate your Pericles.”

“No, I do not: you are my good friend, my good Pericles.”

“I am your good Pericles? So you obey me?”

“In what?”

“You come to London?”

“I shall not.”

“You come to Turin?”

“I cannot promise.”

“To Milan?”

“No; not yet.”

“Ungrateful little beast! minx! temptress! You seduce me into your carriage to feed me, to fill me, for to coax me,” cried Pericles.

“Am I the person to have abuse poured on *me*?” Vittoria rejoined, and she frowned. “Might I not have called you a wretched whimsical money-machine, without the comprehension of a human feeling? You are doing me a great wrong—to win my submission, as I see, and it half amuses me; but the pretence of an attempt to carry me off from my friends is an offence that I should take certain care to punish in another. I do not give you any promise, because the first promise of all—the promise to keep one—is not in my power. Shut your eyes and sleep where you are, and in the morning think better of your conduct!”

“Of my conduct, mademoiselle!” Pericles retained this sentence in his head till the conclusion of her animated speech,—“of my conduct I judge better than to accept of such a privilege as you graciously offer to me;” and he retired with a sour grin, very much subdued by her unexpected capacity for expression. The bugles of the Austrians were soon ringing. There was a trifle of a romantic flavour in the notes which Vittoria tried not to feel; the smart iteration of them all about her rubbed it off, but she was

reduced to repeat them, and take them in various keys. This was her theme for the day. They were in the midst of mulberries, out of sight of the army; green mulberries, and the green and the bronze young vine-leaf. It was a delicious day, but she began to fear that she was approaching Verona, and that Pericles was acting seriously. The bronze young vine-leaf seemed to her like some warrior's face, as it would look when beaten by weather, burned by the sun. They came now to inns which had been visited by both armies. Luigi established communication with the innkeepers before the latter had stated the names of villages to Pericles, who stood map in hand, believing himself at last to be no more conscious of his position than an atom in a whirl of dust. Vittoria still refused to give him any promise, and finally, on a solitary stretch of the road, he appealed to her mercy. She was the mistress of the carriage, he said; he had never meant to imprison her in Verona; his behaviour was simply dictated by his adoration:—alas! This was true or not true, but it was certain that the ways were confounded to them. Luigi, despatched to reconnoitre from a neighbouring eminence, reported a Piedmontese encampment far ahead, and a walking tent that was coming on their route. The walking tent was an enormous

white umbrella. Pericles advanced to meet it; after an interchange of opening formalities, he turned about and clapped hands. The umbrella was folded. Vittoria recognised the last man she would then have thought of meeting; he seemed to have jumped out of an ambush from Meran in Tyrol:—it was Wilfrid. Their greeting was disturbed by the rushing up of half-a-dozen troopers. The men claimed him as an Austrian spy. With difficulty Vittoria obtained leave to drive him on to their commanding officer. It appeared that the white umbrella was notorious for having been seen on previous occasions threading the Piedmontese lines into and out of Peschiera. These very troopers swore to it; but they could not swear to Wilfrid, and white umbrellas were not absolutely uncommon. Vittoria declared that Wilfrid was an old English friend; Pericles vowed that Wilfrid was one of their party. The prisoner was clearly an Englishman. As it chanced, the officer before whom Wilfrid was taken had heard Vittoria sing on the great night at La Scala. “Signorina, your word should pass the Austrian field-marshal himself,” he said, and merely requested Wilfrid to state on his word of honour that he was not in the Austrian service, to which Wilfrid unhesitatingly replied, “I am not.”

Permission was then accorded to him to proceed in the carriage.

Vittoria held her hand to Wilfrid. He took the fingers and bowed over them.

He was perfectly self-possessed, and cool even under her eyes. Like a pedlar he carried a pack on his back, which was his life; for his business was a combination of scout and spy.

“You have saved me from a ditch to-day,” he said; “every fellow has some sort of love for his life, and I must thank you for the odd luck of your coming by. I knew you were on this ground somewhere. If the rascals had searched me, I should not have come off so well. I did not speak falsely to that officer; I am *not* in the Austrian service. I am a voluntary spy. I am an unpaid soldier. I am the dog of the army—fetching and carrying for a smile and a pat on the head. I am ruined, and I am working my way up as best I can. My uncle disowns me. It is to General Schöneck that I owe this chance of re-establishing myself. I followed the army out of Milan. I was at Melegnano, at Pastrengo, at Santa Lucia. If I get nothing for it, the Lenkensteins at least shall not say that I abandoned the flag in adversity. I am bound for Rivoli. The fortress (Peschiera) has just surrendered. The marshal is stealing round to make a dash

on Vicenza." So far he spoke like one apart from her, but a flush crossed his forehead. "I have not followed you. I have obeyed your brief directions. I saw this carriage yesterday in the ranks of our troops. I saw Pericles. I guessed who might be inside it. I let it pass me. Could I do more?"

"Not if you wanted to punish me," said Vittoria.

She was afflicted by his refraining from reproaches in his sunken state.

Their talk bordered the old life which they had known, like a rivulet coming to falls where it threatens to be a torrent and a flood; like flame bubbling the wax of a seal. She was surprised to find herself expecting tenderness from him; and, startled by the languor in her veins, she conceived a contempt for her sex and her own weak nature. To mask that, an excessive outward coldness was assumed. "You can serve as a spy, Wilfrid!"

The answer was ready: "Having twice served as a traitor, I need not be particular. It is what my uncle and the Lenkensteins call me. I do my best to work my way up again. Despise me for it, if you please."

On the contrary, she had never respected him so much. She got herself into opposition to him by

provoking him to speak with pride of his army ; but the opposition was artificial, and she called to Carlo Ammiani in heart. “I will leave these places, cover up my head, and crouch till the struggle is decided.”

The difficulty was now to be happily rid of Wilfrid by leaving him in safety. Piedmontese horse scoured the neighbourhood, and any mischance that might befall him she traced to her hand. She dreaded at every instant to hear him speak of his love for her ; yet how sweet it would have been to hear it,—to hear him speak of passionate love ; to shape it in deep music ; to hear one crave for what she gave to another ! “I am sinking ; I am growing degraded,” she thought. But there was no other way for her to quicken her imagination of her distant and offended lover. The sights on the plains were strange contrasts to these conflicting inner emotions : she seemed to be living in two divided worlds.

Pericles declared anew that she was mistress of the carriage. She issued orders : “The nearest point to Rivoli, and then to Brescia.”

Pericles broke into shouts. “She has arrived at her reason ! Hurrah for Brescia ! I beheld you,” he confessed to Wilfrid,—“it was on ze right of Mincio, my friend. I did not know you were so true

for art, or what a hand I would have reached to you! Excuse me now. Let us whip on. I am your banker. I shall desire you not to be shot or sabred. You are deserving of an effigy on a theatral grand stair-case!" His gratitude could no further express itself. In joy he whipped the horses on. Fools might be fighting—he was the conqueror. From Brescia, one leap took him in fancy to London. He composed mentally a letter to be forwarded immediately to a London manager, directing him to cause the appearance of articles in the journals on the grand new prima donna, whose singing had awakened the people of Italy.

Another day brought them in view of the Lago di Garda. The flag of Sardinia hung from the walls of Peschiera. And now Vittoria saw the Pastrengo hills—dear hills, that drove her wretched languor out of her, and made her soul and body one again. The horses were going at a gallop. Shots were heard. To the left of them, somewhat in the rear, on higher ground, there was an encounter of a body of Austrians and Italians; Tyrolese riflemen and the volunteers. Pericles was raving. He refused to draw the reins till they had reached the village, where one of the horses dropped. From the windows of the inn, fronting a clear space, Vittoria beheld a guard of

Austrians surrounding two or more prisoners. woman sat near them with her head buried in her lap. Presently an officer left the door of the inn and spoke to the soldiers. "That is Count Karl von Lenkenstein," Wilfrid said in a whisper. Pericles had been speaking with Count Karl and came up to the room, saying, "We are to observe something; but we are safe; it is only the fortune of war." Wilfrid immediately went out to report himself. He was seen giving his papers, after which Count Karl waved his finger back to the inn, and he returned. Vittoria sprang to her feet at the words he uttered. Rinaldo Guidascarpi was one of the prisoners. The others Wilfrid professed not to know. The woman was the wife of Barto Rizzo.

In the great red of sunset the Tyrolese riflemen and a body of Italians in Austrian fatigue uniform marched into the village. These formed in the space before the inn. It seemed as if Count Karl were declaiming an indictment. A voice answered, "I am the man." It was clear and straight as a voice that goes up in the night. Then a procession walked some paces on. The woman followed. She fell prostrate at the feet of Count Karl. He listened to her and nodded. Rinaldo Guidascarpi stood alone with bandaged eyes. The woman

advanced to him; she put her mouth on his ear; there she hung.

Vittoria heard a single shot. Rinaldo Guidascarpì lay stretched upon the ground, and the woman stood over him.

END OF VOL. II.

